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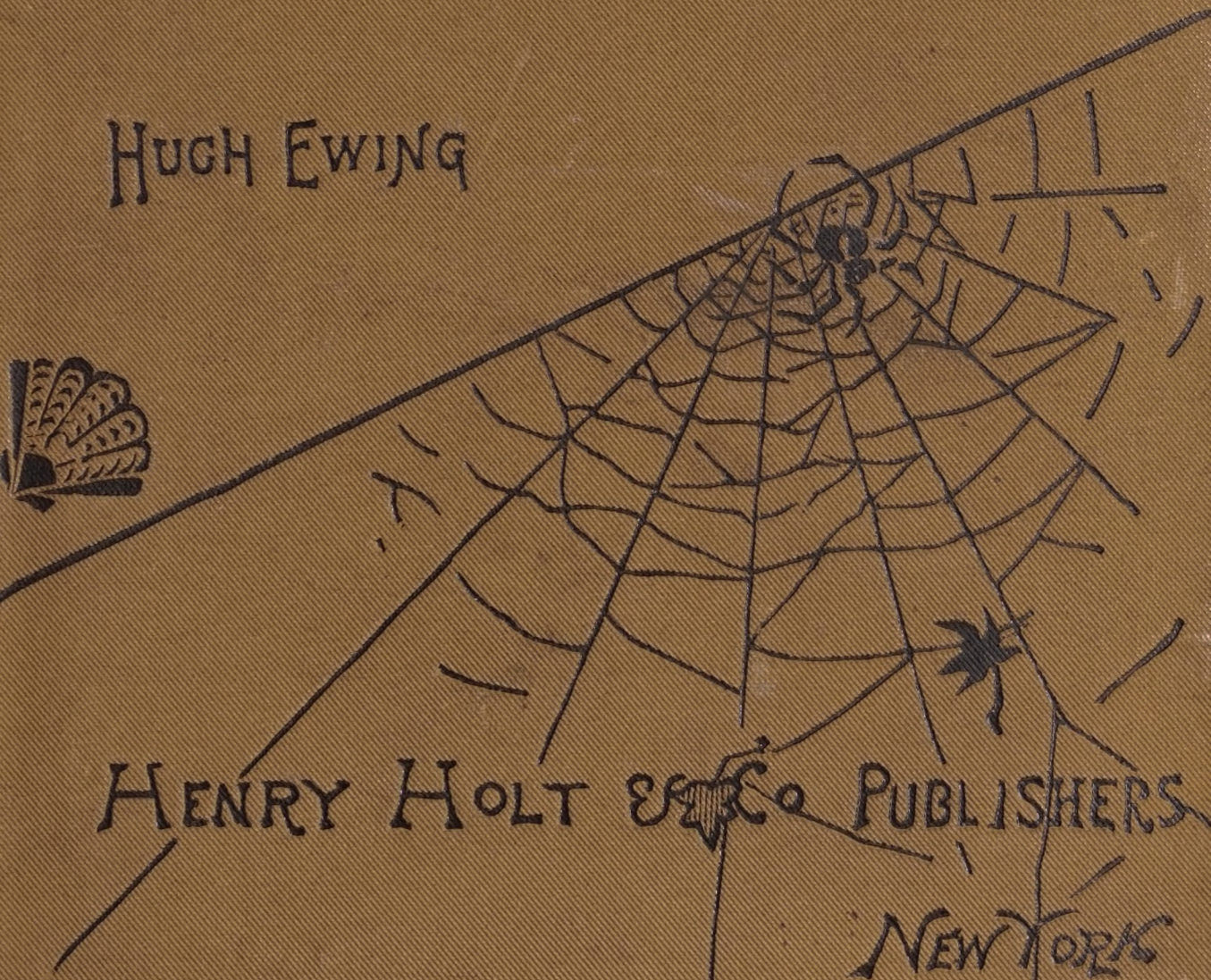
A CASTLE IN THE AIR

HUGH EWING



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A CASTLE IN THE AIR

BY

GEN. HUGH EWING

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A CASTLE IN THE AIR.

CHAPTER I.

MADISON GOES OUT TO SEEK HIS FORTUNE.

IN the romantic valley of the New River, on the eastern bank of the stream bearing that name, was situated the family mansion of the Deckers. It was a large, old brick edifice with a portico and wide hall, and an ill-kept lawn and garden extending to the water. The war, and an ante-war mortgage that had increased steadily in value as the land it covered had diminished, had reduced the proprietor to shifts to support his growing family on his few remaining acres. His eldest son, who was married, lived in the mansion, and worked on and managed the place, while his second, Madison, called Mad. by the male portion of the family and Madie by the female, attended to the hunting department, bringing in small game and deer, and bear occasionally, to replenish the family larder. He was thin, slightly above middle height, with a dark face and a quizzically turned-

up nose, and was a general favorite on account of his good-humor and disposition to make fun. He attended all the gatherings, political and religious, that took place in the valley, including the camp-meetings of whites and blacks, and invariably brought home some humorous account of what took place, to enliven the family.

Shortly after reaching his majority, he rode into the county town and sold his horse that had been given him as a colt, the only thing of value that he possessed and which he dearly prized, and, walking home, informed his father that with the money thus obtained he intended starting out in the world to seek his fortune. It was a trying and sorrowful parting; but Madie declared that he would soon be back with money, restore the estate to its old dimensions, and build up the family, stem and branch. His brother rowed him in a boat to the first falls, where he took an affectionate leave; and Madie strode off down the river road with a light heart.

One hot evening in June, some months thereafter, he was trudging along a dusty ridge-road leading up into central Ohio, when he reached the point where it began to descend into the valley, and saw a large town spread out beneath him. He sat down on a bank to rest and enjoy the view, and began to think over his prospects, which were any thing but promising. He had found the roads over which he had travelled lined with

tramps coming and going, seeking employment, food, clothing, any thing to better their forlorn condition for the passing day. At night they lay under strawstacks, under trees by the roadside, in haymows or in fence corners, where they dropped to sleep, too tired to seek better accommodations or too reckless to care for them. They begged for food when they found men at home; they demanded it when the men were in the fields. Sometimes they committed robbery accompanied by deeds of violence, by the careless use of matches fired barns in which they proposed to sleep, and robbed and murdered upon the highways. Bands of eight or ten would occupy a forest in the sterile hills, and, building their campfires among the rocks, would raid, at night, on the poultry-yards and gardens, orchards and vineyards of the neighboring farms; and the farmers, fearing arson if they interfered, would leave them undisturbed for weeks, until the spirit of unrest moved them, when they would break up and resume the tramp. The great majority of these wanderers started out from their homes originally in the honest pursuit of employment; but many became demoralized by their vagabond life and sunk into the dangerous and unlawful habits of the class beneath them.

As Madison sat thinking over this wonderful picture of life that had lately passed under his observation, he was joined by a dusty wayfarer,

who sat down beside him on the bank, with the inquiry :

"What might your name be, stranger?"

"At home the boys called me 'Shanks,'" he replied, "but lately, on the road, they call me Tramp. I should say 'Tramp Shanks' would be about the thing."

"You are too well dressed for that," replied the other. "I say," he added, "you couldn't spare a fellow a dime, could you, or such a matter, to get a glass of bitters? I'm not feelin' altogether right this evenin' on the insides."

"If I had one to spare for a poor fellow," answered Madison, "I would present it to myself, for I spent my last quarter for breakfast this morning."

"Oh! that's the time o' day, is it?" inquired the wayfarer. "And where do you expect to get your supper to-night?"

"Echo," replied Madison, "answers 'where?'"

"Come with me," said the other, "and I will show you where. Look at this little book," drawing from his pocket a dirty memorandum. "I call it the tramp's guide to a square meal. Let me see," he added, thumbing the leaves, "where is the name of this town? Oh, here it is. Yes, 'Go up,'" he began reading, "'Main to High, turn to left, second house, A No. 1, never say no, meal square, family polite, cook cross.' Never mind the cook," he said, putting up his

book, "they always are cross, more or less. Come," he added rising, "let us tramp."

Decker rose, and they descended the hill together, crossed the valley and entered the town. When they reached the kitchen gate of the indicated house, his conductor stooped down and pointed out to him, written in red chalk near the bottom of the post, the letter "A" and figure "1."

"That," he said, "is for the information of the unliterary tramp as can't keep a book. Houses that are not marked are no go; no tramp need apply. Some are marked 'good people' but 'bad dog'; some tramps don't mind a dog. When you see a gate marked 'G. B. D.,' that is what it means. If you can get into the kitchen there, all right; they will treat you well and apologize for the dog."

"'A' alone," he continued, "means plenty, but cold; 'B', a small bite, a slice of bread and butter, or such like; 'D' means doubtful, depending on who sees you go in, the gentleman or the lady; 'E' means uneven temper—that alludes to the lady of the house. If in good humor, she says, 'Certainly, cook, give the poor creatures something to eat'; but if her feathers are ruffled, she says 'Turn those tramps out of the kitchen. They are eating us out of house and home.' Oh! many a one I have heard call that out to the cook. But, come in," he added, opening the gate, "and get your supper."

When they reached the open kitchen door, Madison following, his conductor halted and inquired of the cook if they could get some supper.

"And who told you this was a tavern?" she answered in a sharp voice. "Come in, and don't stand there keeping the decent man behind out in the dark. Take your seats with the others."

They entered and drew up to the table by three or four rough tramps who were supping with great vigor. Madison felt humiliated and abashed; but he was young and hungry, and did justice to his first charity meal.

"You don't look much like a tramp," said the cook to him, as she eyed him sharply.

"I trust I may come to look the character in time, ma'am," he answered with a smile. "I am young, you perceive, and inexperienced—just out of the nest."

"Where you had better have staid," she answered, "judging from appearances, though you are no beauty."

"Beauty is deceitful, ma'am, and favor is vain," said Madison, taking a leaf out of his camp-meeting notes, with an air that drew a laugh from all present, and relieved him from embarrassment. The supper finished, he politely thanked the cook, and left his thanks for the lady of the house, and withdrew with his companion.

They slept under a tree near town; and in the morning Madison pursued his inquiries for

employment in vain. His comrade had given up the pursuit long before and resigned himself to his vagrant mode of life. They took the road again, and wandered on from town to town, falling in with other parties, sleeping under the same strawstacks, and journeying together for a time and then separating, until one night, his comrade having fallen asleep, Madison overheard three men, who had come up later and sat down against the straw without perceiving him, plan the burglary of a farm-house near by. The stack under which they lay was in a field not far from the main road, and the house a fine one, some distance back. Madison rose quietly, made his way to the residence, and knocked at the door of a room in which an old gentleman was sitting, reading. It was unlocked and opened slightly, when Madison briefly informed him of his errand. He was admitted and gave a detailed recital of what he had overheard. The men had been to the house before dark and got their supper. They had applied at this room, and, observing there was no bed in it, it was this window they intended to force. The old gentlemen was alarmed, as the inmates, excepting himself, were females. His first thought was to send for help, but he had no near neighbors. It was approach-midnight, and Madison informed him that they would soon make their appearance, as they were about to start when he left.

"What is to be done?" asked the old gentleman in dismay.

"Will you leave it to me to manage?" said Madison. "If you do, and have any arms in the house, I will answer that no one inside will be hurt, whatever may happen to the outsiders."

"I have a shot-gun and pistol, both loaded," he answered, "and will gladly leave it to you to manage. What is your plan?"

—"Any one sleeping in the room overhead?"

"No," answered the old gentleman, "it is a lumber room. "Good!" replied Madison, "do not disturb the family. Give me the gun, and come to the room above with your pistol."

Quietly ascending the stairs, they entered and closed the door. Madison opened the window gently, and took his stand near it, requesting the old gentleman to take a seat further back. The house was dark; they had extinguished the light in the library before leaving it. After the lapse of ten or fifteen minutes, a slight noise below announced the approach of the burglars. Madison peered cautiously out; the old gentlemen on tiptoe drew near him. In a moment a perceptible grating noise at the shutter showed they were beginning to force their way in. Madison put his head out of the window and called down:

"Gentlemen, don't break the shutter; the door is unlocked; there are two farm hands inside

with guns and axes waiting to receive you. Walk in."

But, instead of walking in, they walked away, soon breaking into a run, when Madison protruded the barrel of the gun and fired the two loads in quick succession, and, the old gentleman handing him the pistol, he rapidly emptied it, load after load. The house was now in tumult, and the old gentleman ran to the ladies' room to quiet them, and announce the victory. Lights were lit in the bedrooms, and the gentlemen, reloading their pieces, descended to the library, and let out the dog, which had been shut in by the ladies for fear of poison, and was barking furiously at the door. He coursed about the house and grounds in endless circles, and, finding no enemy to contend with, barked defiance until daybreak at the general public.

In the library, after breakfast, Madison gave the old gentleman an account of himself, and was invited to make his home with the family, and assist in the management of the estate, at a very satisfactory monthly stipend. He had wandered on foot, before he lit by chance on this lucky employment, from the banks of New River, at the foot of the mountains in Giles, to the Highlands of the Hudson, more than a thousand miles, and found himself, at the termination of his weary tramp, the friend and trusted agent of the owner of an extensive cattle and dairy farm. Daily he drove

the old gentleman, Mr. Bronson, about the estate in a low, one-seated phaeton, and, when the weather invited, on visits to neighboring places. On one of these out-trips, as they slowly ascended a long hill, Bronson pointed out to him, half way up, a stately iron double gateway, opening on a well-kept gravel road, that swept curving through a wood and lawn beyond, and said:

"In there lives a gentleman of your name, Mr. Samuel Decker; let us drive in and make a call."

They accordingly entered and drove up to a handsome country residence, where they were cordially received by a venerable, white-haired gentleman and his daughter, who was seated near him, reading aloud.

After some general conversation, Mr. Decker inquired of Madison what part of the State he was from.

"I am not a native of this State," was the answer; I was born in Giles County in southwest Virginia."

"We have heard," said Mr. Decker, "of your amusing reception of the burglars at Mr. Bronson's; the country side has been ringing with it. You Virginians have a funny way of meeting danger, and a cool way. From what country did your family emigrate to Virginia?"

"My grandfather came from somewhere near New York city. I don't know that I ever heard exactly where. It was that fact, and a vague at-

traction toward the great city, that induced me when on the tramp to turn my steps in this direction."

"Did you ever hear your family speak of a fortune coming to the Deckers in New York and in Amsterdam?" inquired Mr. Decker.

"I have heard my father say that my grandfather, before he left for Virginia, had contributed money for the recovery of property in the city, and to employ a lawyer to go to Holland for the same purpose. My father said it was the famous Aaron Burr that went over, but as he was a slippery person he probably sold them out."

"You have heard nothing recently on the subject?" said Mr. Decker.

"Nothing," replied Madison; "we live too far out of the world to hear what is going on."

"Well, sir," said Mr. Decker, "I wish you would write your father for his pedigree, and call and spend the day and dine with me when you receive it. And if he is on the family tree, and from what you tell me I presume he is, I may be of great service to him."

CHAPTER II.

AN AERIAL EDIFICE LOOMS ON THE HORIZON.

THERE emigrated in old days, from Old Amsterdam in the delta of the Rhine, to a village of the same name at the mouth of the Hudson, a person by the name of Dekker, who procured, by purchase or grant, a cow-pasture and garden-spot in its outskirts. In due time he died and his possessions passed into alien hands. Over a hundred years since, the descendants of this person began to lay claim to the estate, which was growing steadily in value, and ever since at intervals have renewed their claim, having dropped in the course of time a *k* from the name, and substituted a *c*.

The impecunious young attorney, briefless and on the verge of starvation, takes refuge as a last resort in the Decker case. He inserts in a city paper a news item to the effect that the estate has now reached the enormous value of one hundred million dollars, and that "recent investigations in the old records show a clear title in the heirs of Decker, some of whom have already employed counsel, are handing in their pedigrees and mov-

ing on the enemy's works. It is understood that Mr. ——— ———, of No. —— ——— Street, is retained for the heirs." This is copied by the rural press, and letters pour in on the attorney from all quarters. He answers, giving some account of the original Dekker, of the situation and value of the estate, and calling for proof of relationship and a ten-dollar bill to cover expense of examining their papers, and placing their names on his list of heirs. All who answer the appeal for money receive notice that the office possesses the necessary evidence, where their proofs are defective, to fully establish their relationship, that their names are entered on the list, and that a division of the estate might be confidently looked forward to at an early day. Those who answer, but fail to remit, are advised that their claims will not be examined nor their names placed on the list, and, as the property will soon be divided, they will forfeit their share unless they promptly forward a fee. After a lapse of time, a circular is sent out announcing that, as soon as the court charges are paid, a day will be set for division, and calling for further remittances. Other calls for money follow at intervals until the patience of the Deckers is exhausted ; and the family is allowed a rest until the next generation springs up, and a new attorney, urged on by the old necessity, renews the never-ending suit.

The effect of this periodical excitement in the

Decker family is not beneficial. Many plunge into extravagance in view of the near realization of a fortune, and waste their substance on new bonnets, silk dresses, and other vanities. Men double their potations, and spend time and money in entertaining admiring and envious listeners. Some neglect their business and devote themselves to tracing back their relationship, and maintaining a correspondence with their attorney and numerous members of the family, and in many cases in buying out the rights of the incredulous. Demoralization, in one form or another, taints the entire stock; and they are left, when their high hopes are finally blasted, dissatisfied and suspicious. One-half cherish the conviction that their attorney collected the money, and placed it in hidden investments, and the other half that he sold himself to the men in possession; and they unite, by their discussion of the subject, in preparing the minds of their children to fall fresh victims to the rising generation of starved attorneys. Meetings of delegates are called in various parts of the country, by notice in the press, at which money is raised and an attorney, generally some member of the beguiled family, selected and sent on to the city to look into the matter. Whatever his report may be on his return, his fate is the same. One moiety of the family, as he has accomplished nothing, look upon him as an imbecile, and the other as a traitor; and the ill-feeling that had

been heretofore concentrated on the city attorney is now in good part bestowed on him, until he bewails the hour in which he undertook the mission. That the Deckers will ever in future generations be relieved of their incubus is not to be hoped ; they are doomed, like a caste in India, to wear their chains forever.

A few years after the seventeenth century was half expended, about the time their English descendants were taking New Amsterdam from the Dutch, a Dekker went out from the Venice of the north to Bantam in West Java, as clerk in a factory established there. He received rapid promotion, as the climate removed one after another those above him, and he had the gratification to return to his native canal, after the expiration of a few years of exile, rich in purse, but poor in health. He invested a portion of his earnings in three adjoining, narrow, but lofty houses, that stand to this day where he left them soon after the purchase, hurried reluctantly and prematurely out of life by a deficient liver, impaired by the climate of Bantam. One of these houses stands on a corner in the business quarter of the city, and the other two on either of the intersecting streets. Many a pilgrim Decker, and Decker attorney, has stood at times, during the past hundred years, on the corner diagonally opposite, and had his faith in the Decker claim confirmed by the sight of the lofty edifices losing their upper

stories in the Holland fog. Not that they claimed the buildings themselves ; they would not furnish a brick apiece to the multitude of expectants. But they hoped to obtain the amount for which they were sold, with compound interest to date of recovery, which footed up, according to the computation of their attorneys, the grand total of one hundred million dollars, "which sum, principal and interest, now lies," writes the American agent, stranded on the shore of an Amsterdam canal, impecunious and hungry for money to pay his way home, "in the Bank of Amsterdam, awaiting the claimants." It is not disputed that the American Decker was heir to the estate of the Bantam gentleman ; but at the death of the latter, New Amsterdam had changed its name to New York, and the Dutch intercourse with it had in a manner ceased ; and no claim was set up by him or his immediate descendants. No heir appearing, after due publication, the estate was handed over, according to law, to the guardians of the orphans, who collected the rents and expended them on the asylums ; and, after the lapse of thirty years, the estate was converted into money and turned into the orphans' fund ; and the heirship of the American expired. To make a Decker believe that a time in the past had been reached, or a time in the future would come, when he would cease to be an heir was not within the province of logic. He might be persuaded that the earth was flat,

but not that a portion of it once held by a Decker could permanently quit the family.

Nearly eighty years ago a noted man, who had lost caste at home and had been reduced to poverty, appeared at Amsterdam, lured and blinded in his fallen estate by the false glare of these phosphorescent millions. The garret in which the troubled spirit of Aaron Burr wrought and schemed in the forlorn hope to reinstate himself by the recovery of this phantom fortune is still pointed out. Tales are told of his destitution, of his struggles for black bread, of his despair and final exit in defeat, and shame, and want. The once brilliant political leader, the fascinator of men, the organizer who aimed at the establishment of an empire, had come to this, cast down from his high eminence, like his prototype, for revolt against authority primeval and delegated. He left the case in the condition in which it has ever since stood, with clear proof of the heirship of the American emigrant, of the sale and covering in of the proceeds of the three tall houses into the asylum funds, and with proofs of heirship of the persons he represented. This accomplished, he stood face to face with the inflexible Dutch law, which bars out for laches the heir who lags beyond the period of thirty years, and bars him out once and forever. The Bank of Amsterdam does not groan under the weight of the accumulated interest, anxiously awaiting the coming of the

American heir to carry it away. On the contrary, the asylum authorities expend it as it accrues, and are fortified in their possession of the principal by ages of precedent and custom against which it is madness to contend. The foundation of the case, in the estimation of the heirs, was cemented and made strong by the mere fact that a man of such astuteness had labored on it under the very shadow of the great bank in whose vaults the treasure lay buried. Would he, one of the pilots of the ship of state, have journeyed to that far-off city over the great ocean in pursuit of a shadow? No; but it was not Burr the successful who had so done; it was Burr the broken-down—two very different men. Not Burr from his pride of place, but Burr fluttering and wounded on the ground—Burr thrown overboard, gasping at a straw, in a vain effort to keep his head above water. The interested see what they wish to see, and resolutely close their eyes to that which militates against their theory.

It was well understood that the men in possession of the New York property would, on eviction, be liable for mean profits or back rents, which, it was said, would run up the amount to about the sum (one hundred million) lying at Amsterdam. Some thought it would be well to remit the mean profits, as it would bear hard on the innocent holders, and in fact reduce them to poverty; but others insisted on demanding the last cent—

lands, buildings, and back rents; and, though the attorney who had the case in hand inclined to the side of charity, he frankly confessed that he must bow in this delicate matter to the will of his clients, who had the right, if they so pleased, to financially exterminate the adverse parties—robbers, as many a Decker called them, and honestly believed them to be.

Samuel Decker, in his younger days when money was by no means plentiful with him, had managed to respond in several small sums to the appeal of the impecunious Decker attorney of that day. His father before him had entertained his family with glowing visions of future wealth, and had contributed his share towards furthering the great suit, and left a firm conviction on his son's mind that, one day or other, the Deckers would recover. His father was of opinion they had been sold out, he himself that the affair had not been pushed with vigor, but carried on in a perfunctory manner. And when he received a letter, in answer to a small sum drawn from him by the usual notice in the paper giving an account of the flourishing condition of the suit, he wrote to the attorney of the hour, Mr. John Pilot of No. 10 Fish St., inviting him to dine at his country-seat, and saying that if he would indicate a day his carriage would meet him at the river station and bring him up. Mr. Pilot, who by this time had realized quite a little sum from his advertisements,

and purchased himself a new suit the better to impress his callers, promptly indicated a day; and, armed with maps of the property in dispute as it now appeared, laid off in blocks and lots, and a fanciful one of its appearance as a pasture and garden in the good old days of the propositus of the Deckers, in the outskirts of the then New Amsterdam, he duly made his appearance at Rosedow (as the Decker seat was called), and was well received and entertained. He had prepared himself at all points, and exerted himself to make a good impression on his wealthy client personally and for his case. And he succeeded. Besides lacking a legal and logical mind, the visions of Decker's youth revived and clouded his brain; and all that Pilot said to enthuse him met a hearty reception. The family tree which Pilot had worked up was produced, and from it there appeared but astonishingly few heirs. None, in fact, were entered on it but those who had feed Pilot; and he suggested to Decker that several could be bought out for a small sum, if carefully approached, as they were poor and impatient, and he thought would prefer a small amount in hand to waiting. He would sound them on his own behalf, were it not unprofessional. Having dropped this seed, he turned to Della, and did his best to entertain and impress her. When the day closed and he was taking his leave, the old gentleman said:

"Mr. Pilot, I do not care to buy an interest in the estate, as my own is very large—immensely so, if no other claimants appear than those on your tree; but I should like, as a matter of curiosity, to know what the interest of an heir in the same degree as myself could be had for. If it comes in your way, inquire and write me."

"With great pleasure," answered Pilot, "though it may be some time, months perhaps, before the parties I alluded to visit my office again. But I shall not forget it, and at the first opportunity will make the inquiry and advise you." Then with a sweep of his hat, and a comprehensive bow that lingered on the daughter, he took his seat in the carriage and was driven off.

Some weeks thereafter, the old gentleman received a letter from him in which he said that an heir, Mr. Thaddeus Decker, standing in the same remove from the propositus as himself, had come to him in company with a money-lender and had him draw up a conditional assignment of his interest, to be attached as security to a promissory note for several thousand dollars. That he had privately remonstrated with the gentleman, but he had replied that his needs were imperative; and he could not do otherwise than draw the papers and arrange the business for him. But, before he left the office, he had taken him aside and sounded him on the subject of a sale of his interest. He had, at first, asked a large sum,

saying it would eventually bring him in a million at least, but, in his eagerness for money in hand, had come down to ten thousand dollars in cash. "Happy in having so soon been able to gratify your curiosity," he wrote, closing his letter, "I remain, truly your obedient servant, John Pilot."

In the interval that had elapsed between the visit of Pilot and the receipt of this letter, the old gentleman had spent his time in constructing family trees, calculating the value of the property in the city and the probable back rents, and estimating the sum total lying in the Bank of Amsterdam at different rates of interest, being doubtful as to the rate at which it had been growing during the previous two hundred years; and when the letter reached him he hailed its advent as furnishing fresh material to think and calculate upon. He had worked out his own probable share, and knew the value of the interest referred to, and was bewildered at the enormous disparity between it and the trifling amount at which it could be secured. How rich he could leave his daughter if he added that share to his own! He opened the library door leading to the parlor, and invited her into his study.

"Della, my dear," he said, "I have a very important matter I wish to consult you about."

"Very well, papa," she answered, "I am here and ready. It is not about our trip to the city, is it?"

"No," he replied, "it is about something very much more important."

"There is nothing more important to me just now," she said; "but go on. I am all attention."

"I have here," he said, "a letter from Mr. Pilot, informing me that an interest in the great estate equal in value to my own can be purchased for ten thousand dollars; and I have a mind to buy it. What do you think?"

"Why, papa," she answered, "to tell the truth, I don't think much of Mr. Pilot, and wouldn't follow his advice in any thing—at least, any thing of importance."

"He doesn't advise it, my child. It was I proposed to him to inquire concerning it."

"I heard him suggest a purchase the day he dined here, and it comes from him," she answered. "I say have nothing to do with it."

"Della," he replied, impatiently, "you ladies never can discuss business affairs without bringing in your personal likes and dislikes. Go back to your work, child, and I'll think about it."

And he did think about it, and of little else, for several weeks. He thought how men he knew and used to meet frequently before he retired from business had since acquired millions in a day by a lucky hit. "No," he said aloud, rising and walking the floor, "not by luck, but by nerve; it was nerve that did it"; and, seating himself, he wrote to Pilot that he might purchase the inter-

est alluded to, if he could get it for five thousand dollars, hoping in his secret heart, however, that Pilot could not get it. But Pilot did, and brought the papers up and settled the transaction quite speedily.

CHAPTER III.

THE VIRGINIA DECKERS CLIMB THE FAMILY TREE.

WHEN the banks of the New River ceased to echo the voice of Madison, a gloom settled down on the old house. The family performed their daily duties mournfully, and the mother especially, like Rachel of Bethlehem, would not be comforted. Letters had come at first, each less hopeful than the preceding, until they ceased entirely; and the mother gave herself over to the most dismal forebodings. After a long interval a neighbor, returning from the post-village, rode up to the fence and handed over a letter from the vagrant son to the mother; and the solitary house was soon filled with gladness. It was from the Highlands, giving a detailed account of his tramp, his triumph over the burglars, and engagement with Mr. Bronson, and ended by a description of Rosedow, the old gentleman and his daughter, and asking for the family pedigree. The family were most effectually aroused by this intelligence from their state of depression, and speculation on the future of Madison ran rife. All was beautiful now that had lately seemed so

dark. The father went over all he remembered to have heard concerning the old fortune and suit, and Burr's connection with it, branching off into anecdotes concerning that individual, not all of them entirely to his credit, and expressed the opinion that, as a man of position who knew the city was stirring in the affair, there was quite likely something in it. The mother said there was something significant in Madie's allusion to Miss Della, and it was not at all improbable they would make a match. Madie could get any girl he wanted, she was quite sure of that! No girl was too good for Madie.

"Will," said she, addressing her husband, "I suppose you know the pigs were in the garden night before last, and rooting up the lawn? I declare that fence is a disgrace to the place; it is actually falling to pieces. It ought to be put in order and painted, and the lawn put in order and kept in order, and the house needs a coat of paint, if ever a house did."

"It would cost a sum to paint the house," he answered, laughing quietly; "but I will have the woodwork painted, and the fence too, for that matter, when the young people write they are coming."

"You may laugh as much as you please," replied the mother, "but stranger things have happened."

"The inside wants paint," said the daughter, "worse than the outside."

"I suppose," said the son, "if any thing comes of this fortune, you will buy back all the land?"

"Not only that," answered the father, "but I will promise the ladies to add a portico to the south door, and re-paint the entire house, brick-work as well as woodwork, and go back to the old style of living before the war, except the mortgages. I have had enough of them."

"If I had my way," said the son, "I would buy the Johnsons out; their little place cuts in on the old estate and spoils its shape. It would round us out beautifully to take it in."

"I will buy," said the old gentleman, warming up, "all Giles, if I ever get money enough, excepting the villages. I wouldn't take them as a gift."

"Of course we will go to the Springs in summer," said the daughter.

"Yes," said a younger girl, "and to town in the winter. It's too doleful in the country, and the roads are so dreadful one can't stir out. I thought I should have died before last spring came."

"Suppose it all turns out smoke," said the father, cooling down a little as these propositions came pouring in upon him, "what then?"

"But it won't," said the daughter quickly; "it can't. I am sure we will get it before the year is out. From what Madie writes I am certain of it. It would be dreadful if it should fail now after making our plans. I don't think I could stand it."

"Suppose it does end in smoke," said the mother, "which I don't believe, I will pin my faith to Madie; he will bring the family out yet, mark my words."

"Well," said the old gentleman, "time will tell, and in the meanwhile we had better go to bed. I haven't been up so late since the war."

The following day was devoted to writing letters to Madie. Every one had something to say to him, some news to relate, and questions to ask. The little ones advised him of the condition of the dogs and cats and game, the older girls of the gossip; the mother questioned him closely concerning Miss Della, and gave it as her opinion that early marriages were the happiest; and the father gave him all the information he was in possession of concerning the family tree, and sent his compliments to Messrs. Bronson and Decker.

Several days after the receipt of his budget of letters from home, Madison put the one from his father in his pocket, and drove over to dine at Rosedow. The family consisted of the old gentleman and his daughter, a good-looking girl of eighteen, with auburn hair and blue eyes, mild and playful in disposition, but with decided character inherited from her Scotch mother. This lady, whose Celtic maiden name was Colquhoun, pronounced and spelt in America Calhoun, did not long survive their entry on the estate

which she named Rosedow, after the family seat of the clan, on the western bank of Loch Lomond, opposite the Islands. Helen Colquhoun Decker was a loss not only to her family but to society, which she adorned, and her husband bore her memory through the succeeding years in tender recollection.

When Madison entered the parlor, Miss Della informed him that her father was engaged in his library with a gentleman on business, and said she would endeavor to entertain him until he was disengaged.

"You are quite a public character, Mr. Decker," she said as they sat down. "All the world is talking of the valor you displayed in your encounter with the burglars."

"There was not the least display of valor on either side, Miss Della, if you will permit me to address you so. It is our custom in Virginia."

"Certainly," she answered, "Della, by all means, especially as papa says we are relatives, and we Scotch—you know I am part Scotch—count back and cherish our relations to the forty-second cousin. Besides, Mr. Decker—"

"Madison," he said, interrupting her, with a quizzical look, "between cousins, you know."

"Very well," she continued, laughing merrily; "Mr. Madison—"

"Never mind the Mr.," he again interrupted, with an injured look that set her laughing;

"Cousin Madie is what I have been hoping for, and really have a right to expect—from my Scotch kin."

"Very well, then, if it must be so, Cousin Madie—but what was I going to say? Oh, yes! The Virginians are celebrated for their stately manners. It seems, however, they are not so cold and formal as the people of the North. The affection you bestowed on the burglars is a clear proof of this. What a touching interview it was! Pray give me a true account of it just as it occurred."

"There was precious little in it, Cousin Della (excuse me, Nature will out)—precious little in it. I simply put my head out of the window, and invited them in. That is the long and short of it. Nothing more, I assure you."

"But how would that frighten them off?" she inquired.

"Why, you see," he answered, "they were not looking for an invitation, and it embarrassed them. Nothing so disconcerts an opponent as to meet him with the unexpected. Besides common politeness required them to decline an invitation at such a late hour."

"Where did you learn to be so very diplomatic?"

"Once in the mountains of Giles," he answered, "I was hunting in the snow for turkey, and came suddenly on a hungry panther. She looked fierce, and evidently expected me to scare and

run. It struck me I had best not gratify her, so I stood stock still, and looked her pleasantly in the eye. She gradually changed the expression of her countenance to one of doubt, and slunk away. When she had got beyond springing distance, I drew up and fired. Her skin is a hearth-rug now in the parlor at home. The ruffian is like the panther ; if he finds you won't scare, he will. Somebody must scare, you know ; and it is only a question of who has the steadiest nerve. They don't wish to risk their lives any more than a gentleman does—be assured of that."

"You ought to have been in the war," she said, "you would certainly have made your mark."

"I dare say I would have made it disagreeable to more than one poor fellow, if I had been ; but I was too young."

"Do you remember any thing of it?"

"But one scene," he answered. "Our troops were south of us, where the river breaks through the mountains, and the Federals came marching against them on the other bank of the river. I was looking out of the garret window, to which the children had been sent for safety, when I saw my grandfather in his dressing-gown and slippers, running down the lawn to the river bank, with a squirrel rifle in his hand. He raised his gun when he reached the river, and fired across at the soldiers ; and then ran back to the house with great speed, his dressing-gown fluttering behind him in

the wind. The soldiers raised a great laugh and, it seemed to me, fired back at him in fun to make him run faster. The old gentleman was very much offended at the soldiers laughing at him, and rushed down and took another shot. He only got two or three shots in reply this time, as an officer on horseback waved his sword at the men, and told them not to shoot. Grandfather loaded up again, but the ladies got about him, and kept him in the house."

"What a funny family you Virginia Deckers are," said Della, laughing. "Papa," she said, as her father and Pilot entered from the library, "you have missed a delightful story of the war."

"I am very sorry, my dear," he answered. "Mr. Decker, I am glad to see you. Allow me to introduce Mr. John Pilot, the attorney of the Decker estate."

The gentlemen bowed, neither impressing the other favorably. Pilot felt there was danger in the appearance of a second Decker at Rosedow; and Madison marked him at once as underbred.

"If you have a letter from your father," said the old gentleman, "come both of you into the library, and we will see if the Virginians are entitled to a place on the family tree."

They passed into the library, and Mr. Decker carefully read over the Virginia pedigree.

"Sir," said he, rising and shaking Madison by the hand, "let us congratulate each other. Hen-

drik Dekker was our common ancestor. Your father and I stand in the same degree removed. His fortune will be immense. He is a lucky man, for this discovery was the result of your coming into this neighborhood by a happy chance. Mr. Pilot," he added, handing him the letter, "look over that pedigree, and have the goodness to place Mr. William Decker, of Giles County, Virginia, on the family tree."

Pilot read the letter carefully, and pretended to read it a second time, while he was thinking of some way to make a plausible objection. But, none occurring to him, he took up his pen and, drawing the tree, which lay on the table, to him, perched the Virginian on his native limb.

Della was summoned, and the branch of the tree appertaining to Madison pointed out, and informed by her father that they were cousins.

"And not so far removed at that," he said, smiling; "so you must cease to be strangers."

"I am inclined to think that is already done," she answered with a smile. "When our new cousin entered the parlor, ceremony flew out of the window. What do you think, papa? Are we near enough akin to authorize the address of cousin? The gentleman seems of that opinion."

"I am sure your poor mother would agree with him, were she living, Della," he answered, "and I see no reason why you should not call each other cousin. Relatives should be friendly and

show each other some affection, and certainly should not stand off at arm's length, like mere acquaintances."

"That is a Giles County sentiment," said Madison, with enthusiasm; "no difference how far off, it was always 'Cousin Madie' to me, and I like it. It brings distant relatives near to each other, and keeps affection alive. It is the true thing to do. Don't you think so, Cousin Della?" he added, turning smiling to her. They all, save Pilot, laughed at this, and adjourned to the parlor.

"Here is your father's letter," said the old gentleman, folding it as they walked in, and handing it to Madison. "Present my compliments to him when you write, and my congratulations on his near accession to a great fortune. If you come over in the course of a week, I will have prepared for you a copy of the brief in the case, with an estimate, reliable within a few millions, of the value of the American property, and of the amount in the vaults at Amsterdam; and you may forward it to your father for his information."

Pilot here said something to him in a low tone.

"No, sir; no," he answered aloud. "Mr. Pilot suggested that I might wish to purchase your father's interest, but I feel as though I knew him already through you, and would not entertain the proposition. I wish your branch of the family

to reap their full share, undiminished—undiminished. Tell him when you write to sell to no one."

"Mr. Pilot," answered Madison, "has naturally your interest at heart over that of a stranger. Still, down at Giles Court House I have heard the lawyers say that a professional gentleman should guard the interests of all his clients equally."

"And where may Giles Court House be located?" asked Pilot, with a slight sneer.

"Giles is down in old Virginia," answered Madison, with a pleasant smile, "where the women are fair and the men honest."

Della laughed, and Pilot, disconcerted, turned to Mr. Decker, and entered into conversation. Dinner was announced, and Pilot moved quickly to Della, but Madison was beforehand with him, and led her out. He kept her ear during dinner, though Pilot made numerous ineffectual efforts to divert her attention. He kept the father and daughter laughing and in fine spirits by his witty observations on the manners and customs of the commonalty in Giles, the mountaineers, the colored brethren, and the camp-meetings. In alluding to some funny sermons he had heard, he excited Della's curiosity; and had it not been for the presence of Pilot she would have prevailed on him to preach one; but she got his promise to give her some extracts on a future occasion.

Pilot was disappointed with the dinner, and was glad when it was over. He had not anticipated a fourth at table, and had come from the city with subjects of conversation thought over and arranged in due order in his mind, and fully counted on making a great and favorable impression on both father and daughter, especially the latter. He bore up manfully, however, hid his irritation, and did his best to get a footing in the conversation, though he felt he was overshadowed and outmatched. He tried one fall with his adversary and gave it up. As the laugh subsided, caused by some mimicry of Madison's, Pilot said it was quite amusing, but illustration drawn from higher life might be equally so, and better relished by those accustomed to society.

"If I had sprung from low life myself," Madison answered, "I would not relish hearing it taken off either; but I didn't; I come from the Deckers, good blood, none better."

The old gentleman applauded this, and called out: "You are a true Decker, Cousin Madison; let me drink your health."

Miss Della held up her glass also to be filled, and said with a smile, and slight inclination of the head,

"To Cousin Madie!"—and the iron entered into the soul of Pilot.

CHAPTER IV.

DECLINE AND FALL OF THE OLD RED LION.

JOHN PILOT was a native of a county town in Jersey, where he dwelt until drawn into the great city to seek his fortune. His father, who was of a roving disposition, one day left his wife with one child and no property but the cottage in which they lived (which he would have converted into money and carried with him, could he have got her consent to a sale or mortgage), and set out on his last ramble. Several letters came at intervals during the first few months, and then he disappeared from the knowledge of his little family forever. He did not leave behind him much of a reputation; but his son, when he reached man's estate, partook of it, such as it was. He was inclined to crooked ways, and sought money and advancement with restless activity. He entered at the bar, and attended promptly to such little business as came in his way, or he could create. He was faithful to his office on week-days, and on Sunday took his only recreation, a drive to the Red Lion Tavern, five miles

out on the old road, now disused, leading from New York to Philadelphia. The country immediately about the inn was sandy and poor. The building was an extensive, old-fashioned, rambling frame, with upper and lower porches, gabled, intricate, and painted a deep red. It stood back from the road, leaving an open approach in which was a huge watering trough, a hitching rack, and a tall post with an arm, from which swung a sign-board on which had been depicted a dubious red lion, resembling rather some fabled animal of ancient song.

In days long gone by, the Red Lion was alive from morning till night with bustle and excitement. Stage-coaches dashed in from the road at all hours to change their horses and refresh their passengers. Huge covered wagons conveying merchandise and grain, drawn by six and eight horses, with their jingling bells, made music as they turned in to rest and spend the night. Members of Congress riding on horseback to the Capitol to make and break the laws, merchants, men of all degrees, on horseback, in carriages, and on foot, tarried at the Lion to eat and drink and sleep. Adams, Hamilton, Burr, passed many a night there, and extolled the hospitality of Oliver Decker in their diaries and letters. Burr drew on his credulity and his purse as he halted at the Red Lion on his way to embark for Amsterdam, and sent a draft on him back over the great

water after he reached that ancient city, which, however, was allowed to go to protest. His wines were spoken of with reverence by the connoisseur, and his cooking pronounced faultless. He handed down the Lion to his son when he took his enforced departure from this inn of good things, in all its glory, and with it, as a rich legacy, some letters from Aaron Burr, and a brief sent him by that gentleman, giving a history of the great case in the two cities.

The reign of Oliver the Second was, in the beginning, as brilliant as that of his father, but two powerful enemies rose up against him, one after the other, and smote him to the earth—the steamboat and the railroad.

Mrs. Hollanda Yost, his daughter, inherited the lifeless body of the Lion, from which the soul had long fled, the Burr papers, and some bonds. Without the little income derived from these, starvation, as they sat on the porch and looked out on the deserted road, would have stared them in the face. The visit of young Pilot on Sunday was an event that broke the monotony of her childless life. Yost, her husband, by long indulgence in chicken-fighting, had acquired a belligerent expression that an observant stranger would have noted as a signal of danger,and fell occasionally into quarrels out of which he nearly always came victorious. He was of middle height, spare, but strong and active, and pleasing in his manners

when not on the war-path. He had made an effort to get possession of Hollanda's bonds, but he issued from the intellectual conflict that followed so subdued that he ever after repressed his rising anger in her presence. She was a quiet little woman and loved Yost, but also had a due appreciation of herself, and, while refraining from pushing her victory over him, kept him in proper subordination while about the house. But she could not prevent him from going off occasionally at night and on Sunday to attend the fights, when he compensated himself for his restraint at home, by associating with inferiors.

Late in August Hollanda went to town to make a visit to Mrs. Pilot, John's mother, who was a distant relative.

"Alva," she said, as she mounted the pony from the front steps, "you must promise me to stay at home and take care of the house while I am gone."

"That depends," he answered, "on how long you are gone. I am bound to go to the chicken fight on Sunday at Slugger's. I have a bet on the red chicken."

"I'll be back on Saturday," she said. "Now mind. I've got your promise—day and night."

"Yes," he answered, "I'll patch up the garden fence and cover the hole in the upper porch floor, before some one steps in it and breaks through

the lath and plaster. I can pass the time away very well."

"And you can read at night, Alva," she said. "You mustn't stir from the house at night. Get down the 'Mysteries of Udolpho'; that's very exciting—full of awful things."

"Where is it?" he inquired, with interest.

"On the upper shelf, in the parlor," she answered as she rode off. "And, Alva," she called back, "put a new railing on the upper porch, while you are about it. Somebody will fall over there some night, if you don't."

"All right!" he answered, and turned into the house, got the book from the parlor, and sat down on a rocking-chair on the porch to smoke and read.

"The Mysteries of Udolpho" proved so interesting that not much work had been done on the garden fence, and none elsewhere, when Thursday evening came and found Yost sitting on the porch, deep in its gloomy contents. The scene in front of him was in harmony with his book. A sandy road that rose and fell as it wound through a forest of stunted pine; "old fields" worn out long since and abandoned to nature to re-clothe; a horizon close at hand formed by the jagged outline of the melancholy cypress; the open between the porch and the road sparsely grown over by a yellow, sickly grass, save at the pump and water-trough, where it was rank with noxious

weeds and coarse grass; a broken carriage slowly rotting and sinking into the ground on the left, its tattered fragments of curtain fluttering in the wind; and an abandoned plow on the right, its handle leaning against the fence, and its iron-work sunk out of sight in the sandy soil. In front, the sign-board swung aslant, creaking on one hinge, the other being broken, emitting a sound that seemed like a wail over the departed glory of the ancient tavern. The rains of many winters had washed away the head and shoulders of the lion, leaving still perceptible to scrutiny the faded tail and hind-quarters, fit emblem of the fallen fortunes of the inn.

A turnpike running parallel to the old road and several miles to the eastward, near the rail-road track, had diverted the last remnant of travel, down to the very tramp, who preferred the life and animation of the main thoroughfare to the secluded walks of life. Yost was surprised, on looking up from his book, to see a guest driven up to the porch, and dismount from a country baker wagon. He closed his book, and stepped down to receive him. He was a large man, with side-whiskers and a dark complexion. He was well dressed, and wore a heavy gold chain from which depended a bunch of seals and rings. He first drew from his pocket, whether in ostentation or through inadvertence, a purse heavy with gold, which shone

through the openings; but replaced it and took a handful of silver from his pocket and paid the driver, who was reluctant to receive any thing, as he was not a regular carrier, but finally accepted a small remuneration, and drove off. Yost took up the stranger's satchel and ushered him into the bar-room, producing an old register with a pencil tied to it by a woolen string. The guest registered in a bold hand:

"ISAAC RINEMOND,"

and asked to be shown to his room. Yost took up his satchel and preceded him up the stairway and out on the front porch, and showed him into a room that looked on the road, and opened immediately above the pump and water-trough. As they entered the door, the stranger said, pointing to the broken porch and railing in front of it,

"You don't keep your porch in very good repair, landlord; one of your guests will tumble off there some dark night, if you don't look out."

"I intended to repair it, to-day," he replied, "but got interested in a book and forgot it. It is not often a guest comes here to tumble off."

"Not overrun with custom, eh?" the stranger said.

"Next to none," he answered; "will you have some supper?"

"No supper," answered the stranger; "I had

a lunch at the station. Quiet place, this. Not many passing, I should think."

"None," answered Yost. "If you want seclusion and quiet, this is the shop to find it in."

"I want quiet," he replied. I had little sleep last night, and with your permission will go to bed. Good night."

Yost retired, and the stranger, lighting the candle as it grew dark, took paper and pencil from his satchel, and commenced a letter. After writing a few minutes, he laid down his pencil, and threw himself on the bed, leaving the door and window open to admit the air.

Yost, on going down stairs, lit a cigar, drew up to the table, and resumed his reading by the light of a tallow candle. He was still apparently reading, his eyes were on the book, when ten o'clock came; but he was musing. He had read a passage that set his mind off on a train of thought, and he sat absorbed in meditation. The bright gold that had shone through the stranger's silk thread purse entered his thoughts. He had a vision of himself stealing up to the stranger's room, and coming down again with one of the large gold pieces to bet on the Sunday chicken-fight. He would never miss it—never know it was gone. How silently the persons stole about in the book he was reading! He could do it and the stranger never hear the slightest sound. He closed the book, took a drink at the bar, lighted a fresh

cigar, and thought it over. What a figure he would cut at Slugger's, flushed with a twenty-dollar gold piece! Hollanda had left him but a single dollar—money was so dreadfully scarce. He had never stolen before, but he had never had such a golden opportunity. The man had so much, he would never care for one piece. He would be certain to regret it, if he let slip the opportunity. Perhaps he had better wait until Friday night—Hollanda would not be home until Saturday. He took his candle and another drink, and retired to his chamber on the ground floor, blew out the light and went to bed. His room was under the stranger's, and his window giving on the lower porch was open.

He dreamed Hollanda had returned and scolded him for having failed to repair the porch above, and demanded the return of the dollar she had given him. He remonstrated, saying he would need it at the chicken-fight on Sunday. But she insisted, and he reluctantly drew it from his pocket and offered it to her. Instead of taking it, she started back in alarm, and called out in a loud tone:

"Alva, where did you get that gold?"

This awoke him, and he sat up in bed. A low murmur came through the window from the room overhead. The stranger was sleeping heavily. The sky had become overcast, and the room was dark. After a few minutes he got out of bed,

felt about for his stockings, and drew them on, and walked cautiously through the hall into the bar-room, groped his way behind the bar, and took a glass of liquor. Presently he took another, then re-entered the hall, and silently ascended the stairs, went out on the upper porch, and approached the stranger's room. "The little table stands against the wall," he thought; "and the chair will be at the bedside with the clothes on it." Rain began to fall, and as he reached the door and peered in a flash of lightning disclosed the interior as he had prefigured it. He entered and walked quickly on tiptoe to the chair, and took up the coat in which he had seen the purse put, and which lay, as the flash had shown him, across the seat. As he did so, the remainder of the clothing which hung over its back overbalanced it, and it fell to the floor. The stranger sprang up. At this moment a flash of lightning, followed by a sharp peal of thunder, showed him Yost, in his shirt and drawers, in the act of dropping the coat, and turning to retreat. The stranger sprang on him and they clinched. Yost's blood now rose. He put forth his strength to loosen his opponent's grasp and escape, but in vain; though more active, he was overmatched in weight. They struggled over the room and on to the porch, amid flashing lightning and peals of thunder. The stranger's foot entered the hole in front of the broken railing, and he fell back-

ward, letting go his hold, and reaching out to save himself. His body broke off the spout of the pump beneath in its fall, and sunk in the water-trough, the head striking violently on its inner edge. Yost heard the splash. Panting for breath, he ran down to the bar, lit a lantern, and hurried to the front. The body of the stranger was submerged. He raised the head out of the water, but, seeing he was dead, let it fall back with a shudder, and re-entered the house. After drinking a small glass, full to the brim, of liquor, and lighting a cigar, he ascended to the room above, took the purse from behind the pillow, not finding it in the pockets of the clothing, and took out a twenty-dollar gold piece, replacing the purse by the watch where he had found it. He set up the chair, put back the clothing as he had seen it when he peered in before the tragedy, returned to the bar-room, and sat smoking and drinking gloomily for an hour, when he went back to bed, saying, as he drew the covering over his head,

"I have succeeded,—but what a success!"

About sunrise on the next morning, Yost entered the bar, breakfasted on a glass of brandy and a cigar, and again ascended to the stranger's room. He went to the bed, and, taking the purse from behind the pillow, put back the gold piece he had abstracted in the night, and replaced the purse. He readjusted the clothes on the chair,

and examined the room and porch for any marks of the late struggle, but found none. The stranger had been in his bare feet, and Yost in his stockings, and they had left no scratch on the floors. He noticed the letter on the little table, and, without touching it, leaned over and read:

"Thursday night.

"DEAR DICK: Put something in the *Evening News* about a certain cashier being seen on the steamer for Liverpool that left to-day. Will write fully to-morrow. Safe, I think. This place is a ghostly inn, on a ghostly road, with a landlord, the only soul in it beside myself, whose face does not inspire confidence. Before going to sleep, I will hide the 'bundle' for fear of a call in the night, especially as it is so hot I must leave the window and door open to get breath. But I am a match for most men, and can handle the host if he should call, if awake. The stake is too great, though, to run chances. Head your article 'Off for Europe,' and begin thus:"

The letter here broke off, and was written in such a rapid, running scrawl that it was difficult to make out. Yost, however, studied it over until he got the sense of it. Then, descending to the bar, he cut the pencil loose that was tied to the register, and, not finding any paper, picked up the "Mysteries of Udolpho," and, returning, copied the letter on the margin of the leaves

where the book opened, which happened to be where he had been reading when he got his inspiration and had turned down the corner the night before. He had an uncultivated but natural gift of imitation, and copied the handwriting with fidelity. He refrained from using the pencil and extra paper lying on the table, he had touched nothing in the room but the clothes and the purse. Having accomplished this, he pressed the sides of the book tightly together, put it in its place on the book-shelf in the parlor, tied the pencil to the register, and, fortifying himself with a tumbler of brandy, set out on a rapid walk down the road toward the country town. On reaching the first house, he paid out the dollar Hollanda had left him for the hire of a horse, notified the people of the death, telling them not to go up until the coroner came by, and galloped in and summoned him to hold an inquest.

The coroner and his jury viewed the body, sent for the driver of the baker wagon, and examined the witnesses. The driver said the stranger had met him on a side road near the pike, and requested him to drive him to the nearest tavern on the old road. Yost gave a detailed account of his arrival, registry, and retirement to his chamber. He said the was awakened in the night by some noise, sat up in bed, and listened. The rain was falling heavily, but hearing nothing further, he lay

down and went to sleep. That, going out to the pump early in the morning for water to wash, he discovered the body in the trough, and, without waiting for breakfast, had set out for the coroner. The room and porch were examined, and the money, watch, clothes, letter, and satchel taken possession of, and the verdict rendered that the stranger, Isaac Rinemond, came to his death by an accidental fall from the upper porch of the Old ~~30th~~ Red Lion some time during the night of the of August of the present year. And they "further find that Alva Yost, the landlord, has been guilty of carelessness in leaving his porch-floor ane railing in a dangerous condition."

Six or eight months prior to this event, John Pilot had placed a mortgage on his mother's little home, and gone to New York, rented a cheap office on Fish Street, and taken cheap lodging in its vicinity A few months sufficed to satisfy him that, with all his activity, a long time would probably elapse before he would make even his board and office rent. In casting about in his mind for ways and means to keep afloat, it occurred to him that if the Yosts could be induced to come to the city he could board with them on credit on a pinch, and even borrow money from Hollanda to pay the office rent, if pushed to extremity. He accordingly wrote to her, saying they could make a good living and lay up money by opening a private boarding-house on some quiet street, and

that he would, if they thought well of his suggestion, look about and secure a suitable house, and would be glad to take a room himself, and do what he could to secure them custom.

Hollanda was conservative and cautious, and she suspected Pilot had his own reasons for writing; but life at the Lion was doleful, and Yost was running with bad company; and after considering the matter for a month or so she mounted her pony, as already related, and rode into town to talk it over with Mrs. Pilot. When she returned to the old inn, and found it "stained with blood," as she expressed it, by their carelessness, soon to be haunted, as she verily believed, by the spirit of the ill-cared-for guest, a gloom fell on her; she felt that its fortunes were indeed at a low ebb. It was true that custom had long since departed from the Red Lion, but the memory of its glorious past remained and was cherished; and now, after nearly two hundred years of honorable existence, a house that bore on its old registers the names of the highest in the land, even the honored name of Washington, a house without stain or blemish, was to see its daughter, the last of the Deckers, driven from its shelter by the ghost of a murdered guest. It was too horrible!

Soon a rumor spread through the country that the Red Lion was haunted. A man out coon-hunting, crossing the hill back of the inn, at midnight saw the spirit of the departed stranger,

quite plain, gliding between two rocks. He related his adventure at Slugger's on the following night.

"And what did it look like?" inquired old Slugger, a little startled, snuffing the candle with his thumb and forefinger.

"Why, it looked like *him*, that's what it looked like. The dogs went through fust a snuffin' for a track with their noses to the ground, and it follered the last dog."

"Did it have its nose to the ground, Sam?" inquired one of the worst scared in the group, attempting the facetious to keep his courage up and appear bold.

"No, it didn't have its nose to the ground," answered Sam with indignation, in which the rest joined him; "but I'll tell you what it is, my fine feller, it'll git your nose under ground some dark night, if you don't mind your ps and qs. Them spirits don't stand no jokin'. I wouldn't go home in your shoes to-night, after what you've said, not for nothin'!"

"Never mind," interposed Slugger, as the facetious one turned pale at the prospect before him; "give us its description, Sam. How was it dressed?"

"Why, it wasn't dressed at all in particular," answered Sam. "I was so skeered I didn't notice. It mought have had a shirt and drawers on like *him*, when the jury tuk him out of the trough,

and, come to remember, I think it had; I'm pretty sure it didn't have no socks on; leastways if it had I didn't notice 'em."

"Was it walkin', or runnin', or how?" inquired a curious listener.

"Why, it wasn't a-doin' one nor tother," answered Sam. "It seemed to glide like; put me in mind of a feller slidin' swift on ice."

"It's possible it might have been a live man, after all," said one of the company.

"Live man," echoed Sam with contempt. "Do you think I can't tell a live man from a dead one? Can you see through a live man? And I seed through him and out on t'other side as plain as day. And my hair riz up as stiff as a poker. Do you think my hair'll rise for a live man? Not much! Leastways I got to meet him yit. He don't live round these parts. Live man!"

"No offense meant, Sam," answered the other.

"And none taken," replied Sam; "only it riles me to hear a man ask a ridiculous question."

"Did it seem to be a-huntin' after anythin'?" inquired one of the audience with a blanched face. "Course it couldn't a been after the coon, as spirits don't take no interest in sich like, and can't eat nohow. No one ever heerd of a spirit going a coon huntin', but what was he a-follerin' of the dogs fur? That's what bothers me."

"Why, it's my opinion, gentle*men*," answered

Sam, "and I ought to know somethin' about it if any man does."

"Of course," "certainly," came from the audience.

"It's my opinion," he continued, "that that spirit didn't know the dogs hed gone through afore it; otherwise it's likely it would have gone round the rocks; that stands to reason."

"It mought have followed the dogs to cast a spell on 'em and spoil the hunt," said one. I've heerd my granny say they're full o' castin' spells."

"Did you catch any coon after that?" inquired another anxiously.

"No, I didn't," replied Sam. "The fact is, gentle*men*, I didn't hunt no more that night."

"That spirit wasn't a-huntin' no coon," said old Slugger, who had been listening intently, in a mysterious tone that arrested general attention; "but I know what it was a huntin'. It was a huntin' that there bundle he spoke in his letter of a-hidin' afore he went to sleep. That's what *it* was a-huntin'."

"I sh'd think it would remember where it had hid it," said some one.

"You don't know nothin' about spirits," replied Slugger, "to talk like that. Everybody knows that spirits can't remember never where they hid things afore they came to *be* spirits; a child knows that. And what's more, no spirit

never finds the thing it's a-huntin' fur. *This* spirit won't find that bundle, if it hunts till doomsday, as it will, for it must ; mark my words."

" It must be gold," said Sam, " or it wouldn't trouble him so."

" It's somethin' valuable," said Slugger, " you may depend on that, or it wouldn't a come back to hunt it up. *It* won't find it, but somebody else may, and I pity the man that does."

" Why so ? " inquired Sam.

" Because," answered Slugger, with a dark look, " it will hant him to death, that's why."

CHAPTER V.

THE EVIL GENIE OF THE CASTLE IN THE AIR.

SEVERAL charitable women successively called on Hollanda, choosing the hour of midday, when the sun was in its meridian, and the danger from ghosts at a minimum, and gave her detailed accounts of the several apparitions of the troubled spirit that haunted the vicinity of the Red Lion.

"They say, my dear," said one of these good souls to Hollanda, "that no one has yet seen it beyond a mile from the Lion, and that is its limit, and it hasn't the power to go further off. Old Mother Wolford says—I heard her myself—that if you take a tape-line and measure back from the furthest point it has appeared at, back to the water-trough, you will find it falls considerably short of a mile. They daren't go near the limit for fear they should accidentally get over a step. If they do, she says, they can never get back, and go moaning around in a circle forever, or catch fire and burn up with a blue flame. I hope it don't come into the house, my dear; you haven't seen it, have you?"

"I have *heard* it," answered Hollanda, "but I don't wish to talk about it."

"I am afraid," said the visitor, "that if it has got into the house you will never get rid of it. Mother Wolford says there is only one way that she has ever heard of to lay a house-ghost, and that's to burn the house down."

"If Mother Wolford is right about the circle, I suppose I can get rid of it by moving out of the house," said Hollanda, "and that I'll do. Whether she is right or wrong, it will not be likely to follow me if I move far off."

"And where do you think of going, my dear?" inquired the visitor.

"To the city," answered Hollanda, "and if you will carry a letter back with you and post it I will sit down now and take the first step."

She accordingly wrote to Pilot to look for a furnished house such as he had described, and that she would give her bonds as security for the rent. She, in company with Yost, went up to the city and concluded an arrangement, but returned to make some disposition of the Old Lion. They could not obtain a tenant on any terms; no one would move into it, rent free, merely for the care-taking. They were accordingly compelled to lock up and abandon it to the sole occupation of the disembodied spirit of its last guest. Hollanda nailed down all the windows and shutters and double-locked the doors, save those pertaining to

the fatal chamber. This she would on no account approach, and it was left as it was when the Coroner passed out of it in the rear of his jury—the bed unmade, and the window and door open. The furniture was packed away in the extensive garret, and the pony sold at a low price, as he was supposed to be more or less involved in mystery. Slugger was induced by Yost to take charge of the keys, with power to rent, only, however, after taking his oath that a certain key was not among them. He was induced by friendship alone, Slugger said, to take the bunch in at all; and on no account would he involve himself to *that* extent. He hoped no harm would come to him, as it was. As Hollanda passed under the sign, departing from her old home forever, the Lion moaned on its solitary hinge, and she looked up on its faded remnant and wept. Yost bore himself with more fortitude. He looked back, as they drove down the sandy road, at the old building, and fixed his gaze, until the pines obscured it, on the broken railing of the upper porch, and the open doorway of the fatal chamber.

The house selected by Pilot for the Yosts, with an eye to his own convenience, was as near his office as a suitable one could be obtained. It was a plain two-story, standing on the street, plainly furnished, with several rooms to rent. Pilot took possession of the best of these, on the front, and

made himself comfortable, well satisfied that his effort had been crowned with success and that he had, as it were, succeeded in casting an anchor to windward. Hollanda was rejoiced at the change, and managed the house with economy and industry. Several day boarders were soon secured, and two, including Pilot's, of the rooms to rent, occupied. It was not yet paying expenses, but promised well.

Yost was also glad of the change. He had become quiet and domestic, and made himself useful in the new establishment; but much of his time hung heavy on his hands. His mind was frequently occupied with the unfinished letter that he had copied into the "Mysteries of Udolpho." What could the "bundle" mean? Bank-notes or bonds, surely. If he could find the heirs of Rinemond, and be the means of restoring the "bundle," he would feel relieved, and doubtless be richly compensated. Where could it be hidden? Probably under the mattress of the bed. Strange that the coroner had not looked for it; he evidently thought that it was the gold in the purse alluded to in the letter as the "bundle," for, as Yost now remembered, when the purse was found he had said "he called it a queer name." The authorities at the county town, Benvelt, had advertised for the heirs of Isaac Rinemond; but no one had appeared to claim his

effects. Who was "Dick" to whom the letter had been written? If he could find "Dick," the mystery would be solved at once. Dick was to publish something in the *Evening News*; perhaps they would know him there. Here was a clew. He consulted the Directory at the corner drug-store, and made his way to the office of the *Daily Evening News*, where he inquired for a gentleman named Richard, whose last name had escaped his memory. He was answered sharply that no man named Richard was connected with the establishment, and was turning away disappointed, when a clerk, who had overheard the conversation, said,

"Perhaps he means Dick Rush."

"Yes," replied Yost, "that is the man."

"He is not employed here, but brings in an occasional article for publication," said the first speaker.

"Do you think he will be in soon?" inquired Yost.

"I couldn't say," was the answer. "He may be in any day. Maybe not for weeks."

"If I leave a note for him, will he get it?" inquired Yost.

"Yes; drop it in that letter-box," he answered sharply, and resumed his work.

Yost wrote the following note, dropped it into the box, and returned home;

"Friday, 21st December.

To RICHARD RUSH, Esq

Daily News Office.

SIR: If you will call at my house, No. 501 Fish Street, you will hear from a missing friend.

ALVA YOST."

On opening the door on Christmas eve, in answer to the bell, Mr. Richard Rush presented his card to Yost, and was invited in. Yost showed him to the little parlor, which was unoccupied.

"I received your note only this evening," he said, "and came directly up, my curiosity being somewhat excited."

"Mr. Rush," said Yost, drawing his chair to the table close to him, "before giving you the intelligence I have it in my mind to communicate, you must answer me a few questions candidly."

"Very well," he answered, surprised at the solemnity of Yost. "Put your questions; I'll answer candidly, if I see fit to answer at all."

"In the first place, then," said Yost, "are you a blood relative of Isaac Rinemond?"

"I am not," he answered.

"Are you related to him by marriage?" then inquired Yost.

"No," he answered.

"Had you any business relations with him?"

"None," was the answer.

"You were simply a friend, then?" said Yost.

"Simply, I was not a friend," he rejoined.

"Then in what relation do you stand to him?" asked Yost.

"In no relation," he answered.

"You don't pretend to say you don't know him?" said Yost in astonishment.

"I don't pretend to any thing," he answered, "but I do say, in answer to your implied question, that I don't know him."

Yost leant back in his chair, and looked the young man in the eye, frowningly; but he bore it without flinching.

"Will you keep your seat, and wait for me a few minutes?" he said, at length.

"Certainly," he answered, bowing politely; and Yost left the room. He went to another apartment, and, taking down the "Mysteries of Udolpho," copied from the fragmentary letter on the margin the following:

"DEAR DICK: Put something in the *Evening News* about a certain cashier being seen on the steamer for Liverpool that left to-day. Will write fully to-morrow. Safe, I think."

"If you don't know the man," he said, as he re-entered the parlor, "perhaps you know his handwriting. Read that," and he handed him the slip.

Rush studied it over carefully, and said:

"Whoever wrote it writes a hand difficult to

read, but I have made it out. The writing is unknown to me"; and he handed it back.

"I copied it from the opening of a letter written by Rinemond," answered Yost; "but the handwriting is as like the original as like can be."

"I dare say," answered Rush; "but still, it is a difficult matter to catch, in copying, the peculiarities of a writer by which his hand is recognized. If you let me see the original, perhaps I may recognize it."

"The original is not on view at present," Yost answered.

"Very well," said Rush, rising; "if you have nothing further to communicate, I will bid you good-evening."

"Mr. Rush," said Yost, "take your seat a moment. They informed me at the *News* office that you were the only Richard Rush that had any connection with the paper. That being so, I am under the impression that the address at the end of the letter to 'Richard Rush, office of the *Evening News*, N. Y.,' was intended for you."

This hit succeeded. Rush reddened, and, for an instant, lost his self-possession.

"If you have a letter addressed to me, Mr. Yost," he said, "you hold it unlawfully, and I demand that you give it up."

Yost laughingly replied:

"I have an exact copy of every word in it, but not the original. You can hardly demand my

copy, which is my private property. The original, with other matters of interest to the friends of Rinemond, are not in my hands *at present.*"

Rush leaned his elbow on the table with his hand to his head, and thought; presently he looked up and said:

"Mr. Yost, you keep a boarding-house?"

"I do," he answered.

"Have you a vacant room to rent, and a place at your table?"

"I have both at your service," Yost replied.

"Will you show me the room?"

"With pleasure," he answered; and leading the way upstairs, showed the two vacant rooms; and Rush, selecting the best, paid a week's board and lodging in advance, and the next morning, Christmas, moved in. Yost, when he saw Rush settled in his room, took down the "Mysteries of Udolpho" from the bookcase, and locked it up in his trunk.

Richard Rush was a slight-built young man, of twenty-eight or thirty, rather tall, scrupulously dressed, active and stirring, and untiring in his efforts to advance himself. He made his first appearance in the world, after leaving the obscure village that gave him birth, in the city of Washington, where, by means of cards of introduction from a high official who took some interest in him, and assiduous calling on those in power and their families where he could force

himself in, he succeeded in receiving a commission from one of the departments of the government to carry an empty carpet-bag into the stricken South. His mission was to fill it, and he so exerted himself that in a surprisingly short time, considering the poverty of the land, he returned to New York with it quite stuffed out. He joined a club, and made acquaintance rapidly among the moneyed men, the bankers and brokers. He visited Wall Street and closely studied the mode of transacting business, and bought and sold cautiously, until he thought he understood the game, when, seeing a golden opportunity, he put out all his suddenly acquired wealth on margins on a line of stocks, and came out of the heroic venture a financial wreck. He retained his place in his club, and continued his visits to Wall Street, not on his own account, but as secret agent of cashiers, club friends who felt a delicacy in having their names appear in the dubious transactions carried on in that quarter. He was a glib writer of words unattached to ideas, and turned a penny by the sale of short stories and articles on various subjects, none of which he understood. He was reticent about himself and his affairs, and prying as to the business and lives of those he came in contact with, and whom he thought it to his interest to study. He had no vices that could interfere with success in life, using neither strong drinks nor tobacco,

and was incessantly on foot and watching to catch opportunity by the forelock. With all this he was not succeeding beyond supplying his wants, which were not wasteful. Very few of those who met him familiarly knew any thing concerning his history prior to his invasion of the South, or of his family, of whom he never spoke; but it leaked out in some way, probably by a visit of some one from his native county to the club, and was whispered about, that he was *nullus filius.*

The name, "Isaac Rinemond," entered on the register of the Red Lion by the unfortunate stranger, was indeed unknown to him, for it was assumed at the moment of the entry; but the handwriting was not; he recognized it instantly, and knew the letter was meant for him. The writer before leaving the city had confided in him, and secured his future assistance under a promise of a share in the proceeds of the "bundle," when it became safe to turn it into money. He was not aware of the direction of his flight, as it was undetermined when they separated, and was exceedingly anxious to learn of his whereabouts, though cautious not to acknowledge any connection with him. He cultivated the friendship of every inmate of the house (excepting the transient boarders, whom he treated with polite hauteur) down to Barnaby Snodgrass, the man of all work, who attended the fires and

blacked the boots. He gave "Barney" liberal fees, and soon won his confidence to such an extent that, in a moment when his caution was laid asleep by potations, to which he was periodically addicted, he drew from him an account of his fall, for Barney had descended in accepting his present position for board and such cast-off clothing and fees as fell to him from the lodgers. It seemed that Barney had risen by merit to the position of clerk in a real estate office, not in a fashionable part of the city, however, and had inadvertently put a trifling sum into his pocket instead of putting it in the office till. For this one error of judgment he had been ignominiously expelled, had taken to drink, and sunk to the level that he now bemoaned. Rush consoled him, and told him that he would come out yet, especially if he could be of service to him in bringing him the private conversations he might overhear, as there was something he wanted to get to the bottom of. Thus an alliance was formed that promised to be productive of mutual benefit. He frequently dropped into Pilot's room, and called at his office, and induced a quarrelsome neighbor to retain him in a trifling case. He made but little progress with Hollanda, who distrusted him, and he and Yost stood off, watching each other, each waiting for the other to advance.

"Hollanda," said Yost one evening as they were seated by the dining-room fire together,

"Now we are in the city, don't you think we ought to make a little inquiry after your case? Maybe something might be done with it. What do you think?"

"It is too long gone by," she answered. "If my grandfather failed, what can we do at this late day? No, let it rest."

"Why, as to that," he said, "age may not hurt it. It might be worth looking into anyway."

"No," she answered, "we have no money to waste on chances."

"But it wouldn't cost much merely to have a look at the record," he said. "If I was a lawyer, I would go down to the office and look into it myself."

"You may go, if you like, if it doesn't cost any thing," she replied; "but it will; they will charge you fees at every step you take. The family has already spent sums on the case; let it rest."

"You have the papers with you?" he inquired.

"Yes," she answered, "I have the papers with me, and shall always take the best of care of them; for I am sure we have the right on our side, and can't help thinking that some day we may have the might as well. But a rich Decker must bring it about, if at all, not a poor one."

"How about Pilot?" he said, after musing a few minutes, "perhaps he would examine the records for a trifle. He has plenty of time."

"How stupid you are, Alva," she replied. "If

we take one step we will be led on to another and another, until we are ruined. No; say no more about it, if you please."

This conversation was duly reported to Rush by Barney, who overheard it; and, calling at Pilot's office on the following morning, Rush said to him:

"Pilot, I am informed that Mrs. Yost has a case that I think you ought to get, and make something out of; an old affair; do you know any thing of it?"

"Yes," he replied, "it is the old Decker case; I have heard my mother speak of it. It's older than the hills."

"Much involved?" inquired Rush.

"Millions," he answered. "Old Burr was in it in his day."

"There must be some bottom to it, if he took it in hand," said Rush. "Where does the property lie?"

"Here in the city, and in old Amsterdam," Pilot answered. "There must be no end to its value now."

"Let us put our heads together and make something out of this thing," said Rush. "Mrs. Yost has the papers."

"You will not get her to stir in the matter," said Pilot, "and you won't get a look at the papers. I know her well. It is useless to try."

Rush drew a sheet of paper to him, and quickly wrote the following item for the *Evening News:*

"It is said the heirs of Decker, after a long period of inaction, are again in motion to recover their vast estate. Some missing paper, however, we are informed, is causing them trouble and delaying action. How much truth there is in this report we are unable to say."

"There," he said, as he pushed the paper over the table to Pilot, "that will bring the papers out of the landlady's lock-up."

"Yes," assented Pilot in admiration, "that will bring them."

The item was read out by Rush from the *News* at breakfast the next morning. The boarders congratulated Hollanda. Yost excitedly remarked on the singular coincidence of its coming on the very day following their conversation on the subject. Pilot said his services were at their disposal, free of charge, as he had idle time and they were old friends; but Hollanda said she would pay a contingent fee conditional on recovery. She could not afford to do more or less. The papers were produced—the brief of Burr, the proof of kinship—and committed to the custody of Pilot, who bore them off to his office, followed soon after by Rush, the evil genie. They pored over them for several days, and then began a series of articles or items, all touching on some feature of the Decker case, now in one paper, now in another, which were copied by the country press, and brought down a shower of letters con-

taining ten-dollar bills on John Pilot, No. 10 Fish Street, whose name, address, and connection with the case as chief attorney were artfully and casually introduced into every article.

CHAPTER VI.

TIDINGS FROM ACROSS THE OCEAN.

AMONG the Burr papers was found a family tree, most artistically constructed and colored with all the tints of the rainbow. On it was seated, on his proper branch, each person who had come forward at that early day and, by fee and otherwise, established his character as a genuine Decker. Barney, who had acquired in the real estate office some skill as a draughtsman, was spared from his duties at the house to make some plats of the New York property and a fair copy of this tree, placing upon it, however, in lieu of the ancient Deckers, those of the present generation who had entitled themselves to seats on its branches by their liberality, and filling it up with fictitious names. It was intimated to Barney at the same time that if he made himself very useful in the affairs pertaining to this business, and was secret and faithful, he would be promoted, if all turned out well, to a clerkship in the office. Rush threw out this intimation under injunctions of the strictest confidence and silence.

When Samuel Decker, of Rosedow, made his

offer of five thousand dollars for an interest, it was one of these fictitious Deckers that assigned over to him his inheritance, and it became necessary to find some one to personate him and attach his name to the transfer. After the duties of the night were performed, Barney came by appointment to the office of Pilot and found Rush awaiting him.

"Barney," said he, "you know there are tricks in all trades."

"Yes," replied Barney, "we had them in the real estate business; they all have them, of course."

"Well," resumed Rush, "the lawyers have them too; and one of theirs, which they are obliged to practice to do business at all, is to use fictitious names in their law papers. Now, some clients don't like tricks, though they are not injured by them in the least, and when they find a fictitious name in their papers they come to their lawyer and raise a row. The lawyer examines the name carefully and swears he never put it there—and he never does, for fear his handwriting should betray him, but has his clerk do it—says it's carelessness, and shan't occur again. The client goes out satisfied, and no harm is done. Don't you see?"

"Yes," answered Barney, dubiously, "I see."

"Very well. Now, in this Decker business, Pilot finds it necessary in making out the case to

use from time to time the fictitious names on the tree you copied so splendidly, until he succeeds in finding the real men, when their names will be substituted. He will simply ask the clerk of the court to permit him to substitute such and such names for such and such others that slipped in through a mistaken notion that they were heirs, when it has turned out that they were not. Now, this is all there is in it, and yet Pilot is compelled to keep it perfectly secret until the real men are hunted up, or it will upset his whole case. Here is a paper he wants to file in the morning, and as he was called out to-night he requested me to explain it to you and have you sign it."

"But it might get me into trouble some day," said Barney, uneasily.

"Not in the least," answered Rush. "Even admitting there was any danger to any body in it, which there is not, who would ever know that you wrote the name? Why, nobody. Look here, Barney," he continued, "Pilot says that as soon as this case is wound up he will take you in as clerk at seventy dollars a month, and, in the meantime, pay you for each little service you render him. He gave me this ten to hand you to-night for the tree and your signing this paper. Take the pen, man, and sign the name of Thaddeus Decker here at the bottom."

Barney took the pen from Rush and signed the name with a trembling hand, which, as Thaddeus

was supposed to be advanced in years, was all the better. He took up the gold piece from the table, and, going out, drowned his apprehensions is the flowing bowl.

Rush entered the office of a starving notary and, personating Thaddeus, threw on the table double the usual fee and received his signature and notarial seal to the statement that he personally knew Rush to be Thaddeus Decker, the person named in the conveyance; and Pilot carried the document to Rosedow, and returned with the sum of five thousand dollars, which he divided evenly according to agreement with Richard Rush.

The receipt of letters now began to diminish rapidly, and it became apparent that the income from that quarter would soon cease to be significant. Rush made a list of the most promising writers, and got from the intelligence office their financial status; and, selecting the most available, opened a special correspondence with a view to the sale to them of the interests of what he termed incredulous or impecunious heirs. This resulted in his making visits in the city and incursions into the neighboring States. Some sales were made, but at insignificant and disappointing figures, and many rebuffs met with that the high-toned emissary could not brook. On receipt of the last of these, he abandoned this promiscuous hunt, and turned his entire attention to running

to earth the proprietor of Rosedow. The gentleman who caused this change of tactics was a speculator, daring and rich, and a Decker, who had not responded in any way to the advertisement, and had not yet been communicated with. His family was abroad, and he was living *en garçon* at the St. Nicholas. Rush called in the evening and found him quite at leisure, drinking hot punches with a friend. He entered into the examination and discussion of the tree and papers with pleasure, and displayed a familiarity with the case. He was an heir, he said, and had long known the history of the claim, but generally, never having given it any special study. Rush was delighted, and with great cunning felt his way along from the immense value of the property to the good prospects of recovery, for which he drew on Burr, down to the impecunious heirs who could be bought out, for the interests of two of whom he was then in negotiation. "These things to hear" the speculator so seriously inclined that Rush, emboldened, made him a distinct and formal offer to furnish him a transfer unencumbered of them both for thirty thousand dollars.

"How much do you think the two will eventually pan out?" inquired the speculator.

"The two together," answered Rush, "are double the value of your own interest. You all three stand on the tree at the same distance from Hendrik Dekker, the common ancestor."

"And how much do you think my interest is worth now?" he inquired. "Come, be honest."

"That will depend upon what amount of back rents the court will allow," Rush answered, "and on the rate of interest allowed in Holland."

"Certainly," answered the speculative Decker. "I understand that perfectly well. You have studied the subject closely, however, and ought to be able to come somewhere near the present value of my interest."

"Well," said Rush, taking up a pencil, and making a few figures on a paper before him, "I should say that your interest is worth to-day not much short of a million."

"I pledge you my word," said the speculator, "and call this gentleman," turning to his companion, "to witness it, that I will transfer to you my interest in the great Decker estate, now, at this table, if you will hand me over in consideration the sum of ten dollars."

Rush was so utterly taken aback at this, and showed his discomfiture so plainly in his face, that the speculator leaned back in his chair and burst into a fit of laughter, in which he was joined by his companion; and Rush rose and, hastily gathering up his papers, left the room.

"It's a mercy," he muttered, after getting into the air and somewhat recovering his self-possession, "that the Rosedow Decker is not a man after that fashion."

For several days following this mortifying event, Rush had his meals brought to his room on the plea of sickness, and occupied his time in meditation and writing. His seclusion over, he walked after breakfast to a Dutch quarter of the city, and had some papers which he had written translated into Hollandaise, and ordered a cheap leaden seal made, which he called for as he came up to supper. During the evening he went to the office and entered into a review with Pilot on the state of affairs.

"Pilot," he said, after some discussion, "I can trap a Decker every day and not half try; but when I catch him, what does he amount to? His pocket is empty, or hasn't enough in it to pay for the bait. I am getting sick of chasing these pecuniary shadows. As to a rich Decker, it's easier to catch a fox. I felt perfectly certain I had the St. Nicholas man hooked for twenty-five thousand, when he leaned back in his chair and laughed in my face. A poor man will swallow the naked hook."

"Receipts from the rural districts are about over," said Pilot. "Occasionally, only, a ten-dollar bill comes in from some person who says he has scraped it up and hopes he isn't too late to get on the list for division. But we have Rosedow left. Isn't it about time to fall back on the Highlands?"

"What I was coming to. I have thought of

nothing else for days," said Rush. "Read these documents. Here, this one first." And Pilot took up the one indicated, and read as follows:

"(Translation).

AMSTERDAM, HOLLAND, May 21, 1872.

To OBADIAH JONES, U. S. Consul, 37 Beeker St.

"SIR: As the heirs to the estate which my esteemed client, Mr. John Pilot, of New York, represents are Americans, I have thought it my duty to invite you in your official capacity to be present to-morrow noon at the office of the president of the Bank of Amsterdam, to listen to a proposition which the said president and directors of the bank desire to make through me to the American representative of the Deckers. In case their proposal meets with your approbation and mine, I would be pleased to enclose a statement from you to that effect, with my communication to Mr. Pilot. If it does not meet our views of what is just and due to the heirs, your support will prove of value to me in my discussion of the affair with the bank.

I remain, sir, with high esteem,

Your obedient servant

PETER VAN VELSEN, Advocate."

"Here," said Rush, "is Van Velsen's original letter in Dutch, of which you have just read the translation. You do not read Dutch? Never mind, the translation is quite correct. Here, now, read the consul's letter to Van Velsen, written, as you will perceive, after the interview at the bank." Pilot took the letter and read as follows:

"United States Consulate,
AMSTERDAM, May 24, 1872.

To MR. VAN VELSEN, Advocate,
63 Butter Market Square, Amsterdam.

"SIR: Referring to our interview on the 22d inst. with the president and directors of the Bank of Amsterdam, I have to say that, in my opinion, the Dekker heirs whom you represent would do well to accept the terms then proposed. In order that there may be no misunderstanding hereafter as to my action in giving the proposition of the bank my endorsement, I beg leave to state my understanding of it and of the arguments advanced by the directors which in great part led me to my conclusion.

"First. While admitting that the bank has realized from a loan of the original fund and its annual accumulations an interest of something over an average of six per cent., as shown by their books, yet they say they are entitled in equity to the one-sixth of this, their usual charge for handling sums of like character, and perhaps entitled to more in law in this case of foreign heirs.

"Second. That, whereas it is in their power by taking an appeal from the recent decision of the equity judge to delay payment for a year at least, yet, in case the heirs accede to their proposal, they will begin the shipment of the specie to New York within ten days after the receipt of such agreement, legally attested.

"Third. They accordingly make toMr. Pilot the following proposition, to wit:

"That he, as representative of the Decker heirs, shall bind himself to give the bank a full acquittance on receipt of the original sum deposited

with it, and compound interest at the rate of five per cent. per annum, provided

"(a) That all interest shall cease on the date of the first shipment.

"(b) That the shipments shall be monthly and the bank have the option of restricting them to five million dollars a shipment.

"(c) That charges of transfer and insurance shall be at the cost of the heirs.

"I will add that the rate of interest is now low, the bank paying on loan deposits only two per cent. The high interest of former years accounts for the average stated at the interview. I think the heirs ought to be content, and close at once with the directors' proposition.

I am, very truly,
Your obedient servant,
OBADIAH JONES,
U. S. Consul."

"The consul, you will perceive," said Rush, when Pilot had finished and laid down the letter, "has forgotten to append his official seal. To remedy this negligence on his part, I had one constructed to-day, a poor thing in lead, but it will pass." He then produced a seal and pad, made a trial impression on a sheet of paper very well done, and having a decidedly genuine look. It read as follows, circled about a spread eagle in the center: "United States Consulate, Amsterdam, Holland." He then made an impression on the consul's letter at the bottom, and to the left of the signature.

"Here," he continued, "is the official statement and offer of the president of the bank, addressed to Van Velsen, and a letter from him to you enclosing it and the consul's communication, and his letter to the consul, which he requested him to enclose to account for his connection with the case. The original letters, which are in Dutch, I have here in this package. These, even to the spelling of the name, are accurate translations, and, as you will observe, are so marked."

"I think," said Pilot, "the originals should be attached, in each case, to the translations."

"I so intend," answered Rush.

The evening after this an article headed "highly important" appeared in the *News*, in which it was stated that it had leaked out that the Deckers were on the very eve of a settlement of their Holland claim. The paper was mailed to Mr. Decker at Rosedow, with the item marked in red pencil.

Rush attached the Dutch and English papers in couples as suggested by Pilot. The tree was pruned down to seven names by the crossing off in pencil of all but those to be used in the coming negotiation. Pilot obtained from the recorder's office a list of the houses in the city belonging to Mr. Samuel Decker of Rosedow, from the rent of which he drew his chief income, and Rush, with this list, entered Wall Street, and learned by inquiry at different houses the highest sum that

could be borrowed on them, by note and mortgage. A transfer was drawn up from Mr. John Outcalt Decker, who represented two shares, one on the paternal and the other on the maternal side, to Samuel Decker of Rosedow, of all his right, title, and interest in and to the Decker estates, both in New York and Holland, for the sum of seventy-five thousand dollars in cash. The date to this document was left blank, to be filled in when acknowledged and used.

Barney was called to the office at night, again in the absence of Mr. Pilot, to sign this transfer, but he hung back when informed of the new name he was to assume.

"Why, Mr. Rush, this is a different name altogether; the other one was Thaddeus," he said.

"What difference does that make?" asked Rush. "One name is as good as another."

"As bad, you mean," retorted Barney, "that is, as bad for me to sign. Suppose I was caught? I'd get five years in the lockup, perhaps, for each name. If it was the same name, I wouldn't care so much."

"What nonsense you are talking, Barney," said Rush. "You'll never do for a clerk, that's clear—not for a lawyer's clerk. Why, man, you run no risk at all. The lawyer bears all that when there is any. He is responsible for every thing signed in his office; that has been decided over and over again. He says to his clerk a dozen

times a day when business is brisk—'Here, sign this; put your name here; write such a name there'; and the clerk does it as a matter of course; and goes on with his copying, or whatever work he is at, and the courts say he is not in the least responsible. No business could be done, if all clerks were as squeamish as you."

"Well, Mr. Rush," replied Barney, "because I made one little slip in the real estate business is no reason I should go on slipping, or that people should ask me to. Every man has to take care of his own neck."

"His own neck," echoed Rush, with scorn. "What's the man talking about? Do you take me for a hangman?"

"No, I don't, Mr. Rush," answered Barney, "far from it, and I don't wish to make myself disobliging either; and I don't want to lose your good-will, if I can help it, without running too much risk."

"Very well, Barney," said Rush, "you are a free man. You can do as you please about obliging Mr. Pilot in this matter. He can easily enough get another in your place. If you can find any quicker way of getting a rise in life, take it by all means. But it makes me mad to see a man with his foot on the ladder take it off and walk away for fear, if he climbs up, he may possibly get a fall. Do as you think best though; I'll not persuade you."

"I heard Mr. Kent in the real estate office," answered Barney, "say one day, 'Never drink water until you have looked in the cup, and never sign a paper until you have read it.' I've generally looked in the cup since then, when it was light enough to see; and I've never liked to sign a paper since without reading it. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll sign this paper, if you'll let me read it first."

"Pilot left a ten for you to-night, Barney," said Rush, "and I'll put another ten to it, and that'll make it twenty, if you sign and say no more about it. Pilot don't want people, not yet in the office, looking into his business."

"I'll sign it if you let me read it, Mr. Rush," answered Barney, doggedly.

"Well, take it and read," said Rush, with a mutter that was not a blessing on Barney, "and, if you ever talk about it outside, I'll blow your brains out—if you have any."

"I haven't got much," he answered, "or I'd have walked straighter in life, especially in the real estate business,—but I'm no blabber, Mr. Rush, and I don't need threatening; and you needn't fear me. I'll read the paper, and I'll sign the paper, and that will be following the advice of Mr. Kent, who was a good man, if he did turn me out for one slip."

Barney opened his eyes wide when he saw the consideration, and looked across the table at

Rush dubiously; but took up the pen, and, after a moment's hesitation, signed at the bottom the name of "John Outcalt Decker," saying, "I promised, and I'll keep my word."

CHAPTER VII.

A HUNT FOR THE HIDDEN BUNDLE.

AS Rush was approaching his lodgings on the following morning, he overtook the postman, who handed him a letter addressed to Alva Yost. He put it in his pocket, and, going to his room, ordered Barney to bring him a cup of boiling water. He steamed the envelope, and, taking out the letter, read as follows:

"Racoon Holler, June 15, 1872.

ALVA YOST, 501 Fish Street, N. Y.

ALVA: I got your letter, writ last month. The red lion is all right as fur as I know. I rid round it twice since you left. The last time I see the track of men leadin in thru a hole in the back fence. There is some devilment going on there I think. The doors seem all shet fast. Sam says he seed a light the other night a comin out of the cellar. Who ever carried it seemed to be a shaden of it like with his hand. He says mebe it was in a lantern. He was fur off and couldn't see plain. He was on the top of possum nob a coon hunten. He thinks it was the spirit a hunten the bundle that Rimund hid. I don't. Spirits don't carry candles and shade um with thur hands. They aint got no

hands to speak of—no lanterns, nuther. Where cud a spirit git a lantern. Sam says mebe it was a sperit lantern. thats bosh. Howsomever he seed somethin thats certain fur he cum right down to Racoon Holler skeered out of his wits. The sperits been seen many a time since you left not fur from the lion tho. Im a thinken it might come over to the holler and hant me fur the keys if I keep em much longer. It may be some dare devils are a usin the lion at night for some roggery. Them tracks warnt made by no sperits.

Yours till deth
DANNEL SLUGER."

Rush copied the letter in part and the post-mark on the envelope, and, resealing it, dropped it on the table in the hall, and, calling Barney, feed him, and gave him orders to listen sharply as soon as Yost read the letter, and through the day and evening, when he and Hollanda were together. But nothing came of it. Yost put the letter in his pocket, and, so far from discussing its contents with his wife, did not even mention its receipt.

The next morning Rush took the train for Benvelt, and, on his arrival, made inquiry at the hotel for the Red Lion, and, on asking about the report of its being haunted, learned the story of the death of Rinemond as known to the public. He then called at the office of the Probate Judge, and was permitted to see the contents of the satchel, on saying that he might give some clue

to the identity of the late owner. There was nothing in the satchel of value beside the money and the watch. He read the fragmentary letter carefully, coloring as he found how Yost had trapped him, and left, saying that he was mistaken in the man. He then took the way-train back to the station nearest the Red Lion, and, inquiring the way to Slugger's, set out on foot for Raccoon Hollow, which he reached at dark.

The humble tavern of Slugger's was situated several miles further from the station than the Red Lion and the old road, and was embosomed in a wilderness of barren pine hills. Its patrons were hunters and the half-wild dwellers in the surrounding solitudes. They dropped in on week-days to drink and occasionally take a meal. Of travel past the door there was none. It opened on a by-road that terminated not far beyond in a *cul-de-sac*. On Sunday there was a dance and a chicken-fight or a horse-race, and gambling was carried on with small stakes and great uproar. On Sunday Slugger's lived; on week-days it failed to make a living. On Sunday Slugger was jovial and feared no evil; on week-days he was despondent and given over, especially in the gloaming, to fear of the invisible world. The sign-board nailed over the front door had, burned into it with a red-hot iron, done by some native artist, the words, "The Coon"; and an ineffectual attempt had been made by the same hand, with

the same instrument, to portray, in one corner, a diminutive representation of that interesting animal. The Slugger year consisted of fifty-three days, including the Fourth of July.

The entrance of Rush occasioned considerable surprise. Slugger showed him to the best room, and ordered the slaughter of a possum from the pen in his honor. He invited him to take a glass of liquor, which, contrary to his custom, Rush accepted, and in turn treated the landlord. After supper, at which he partook of the possum and praised it, though he found it excessively disagreeable, he retired to his chamber and returned in his shirt-sleeves, saying it was warm, and he wished to make himself at home. Slugger was quite charmed with him, and was full of curiosity to learn his name and business. The "Coon" had no register, and the name of a guest, unless he gave it up voluntarily, had to be wormed out of him.

"Stranger," he said, after several hints had failed, "what mought your name be, if I mought make so bold?"

"My name is Rankin," answered Rush.

"And where mought you be from, if it's not askin' too much?"

"From Philadelphia," he answered.

"From Philadelphy," said Slugger in surprise; "that's a long ways off. It's a wonder: what brought you clear from thar' to these lonely parts?"

"I am looking for a house in the pine wood country," Rush said, "to rent, to make furniture in. It is too expensive taking the wood to the city."

"You're a furnitur' maker, then?" inquired Slugger.

"Yes," Rush answered, "light, cheap, pine furniture. There is plenty of pine about, but no building fit; none large enough to make and store away in."

"Why, I know the very house, and have the rentin' of it," said Slugger. "That is," he added, "if you're not afeard to go in it."

"What's the matter with the house?" asked Rush.

"Hanted, that's all," replied Slugger, with an ominous look.

"What house is it?" inquired Rush.

"The Red Lion. It's three mile back, on the old road. You come in half a mile of it, if you come out from Baker Station. It's large enough for two fact'ries."

"What's the rent?" inquired Rush.

"Why, we can't ask what it's wuth," replied Slugger. "Hanted houses dont't rent high in no country. We won t disagree on that, if you darst to take it. And it *may* not hant you," he added hopefully. "I never heard of a sperit hantin' a fact'ry—that is, when it was occapied. The noise of the machines 'll drive it out, as like as not."

"What is it being haunted about?" was the next inquiry.

"Why, you see," answered Slugger, in a low tone, "I don't much like to talk about it after dark. One doesn't know who mought be round listenin'; but, as you are a stranger, I'll tell you. You see, a man put up there one evenin' when Yost was alone in the house, and Hollanda—that's his wife—had gone to town, and wouldn't take no supper. He put his name down on the book, and went to bed, and Alva—that's Yost—showed him up."

"What name did he register?" asked Rush.

"He writ his name down, Isaac Rinemon'—I see it myself on the day of the inquest, and I've seen it sence in the night when I lay awake in the dark with my eyes open. Ef I had it to do over, I wouldn't look at that register, not for any thing. Mirandy," he called to his daughter in the adjoining supper-room, "light that candle agin you jist blowed out. It's more cheerful like."

"I don't want it no more," she answered. "You're skeered; that's what's the matter."

"I'm not!" he retorted petulantly; "light it up agin, I say. Where was I? Yes, in the night he got up and went out on the wet porch, and slipped off and fell into the water-trough, and drowned hisself. He writ a letter sayin' he was goin' to hide a bundle, and his sperit has been

a-lookin' for it ever sence; and I wish it may find it and go away; but it won't."

"Why not?"

"Because it can't," he answered.

"Well," said Rush, "I will go over in the morning and examine the house, and if it suits I will rent it, if we can agree on a price. You will go with me, I suppose."

"I'd like to," said Slugger; "but I've got a set of chicken-gafts to make aginst Sunday, and can't spare the time."

"He's afeard to go, stranger," called out Mirandy from the supper-room, with a laugh.

"I'm not," said Slugger, angrily, "and I'll thank you not to put in atween the stranger and me, until you're asked. It's unmannerly and unrespectful besides!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Mirandy. "Gafts!"

"Give me the keys, and I can find my way over in the morning," said Rush.

"I'll git 'em for you to-morrow," replied Slugger. "You see, I keep 'em hid out in the rocks, for fear of acci*dent*."

"Yes, I see," answered Rush.

During breakfast in the morning, at which Rush resolutely declined to partake of possum, Slugger came in from the cliffs with a bunch of keys, rusted from exposure, and Mirandy polished them with ashes. Slugger explained that one was missing, and would be found, if any one had

the temerity to seek it, in the door of the chamber in which the last guest of the Red Lion had passed a portion of his final night on earth. Dandy, late the property of Hollanda, was saddled and brought to the door. This unfortunate animal had so depreciated in value and in public estimation by its disposition to break bounds and return to its old haunts about the Red Lion that it sank within reach of a small purse saved up by Mirandy, who purchased it, and had no fear of bringing it back in person when it strayed to its old home. The ownership gave her importance in her own eyes, as well as in the estimation of the gathered beaux on Sundays, but displeased her father, who feared the attractive power of Dandy over the wandering spirit only less than the power of the keys. Provided with a lunch, and directed by a path across the hills, Rush sallied forth on the fatal pony, bearing the dreaded keys, an object of painful solicitude to Slugger.

The way led through a pine forest, up and down steeps, and along the face and bottom of rugged cliffs. The progress was slow, Dandy passing the time in meditating on the sweetness of the Red Lion grass, and Rush on the hidden bundle. He was satisfied it had not been found. Yost showed no sign of having money, and dread of the spiritual hunter had kept the country people aloof. Where could Rinemond have hidden it? Perhaps dread of pursuit and capture, as well as of

the ill-looking landlord, had induced him to rise in the night, after Yost had retired, and hide it in the stable, or, maybe, in the field, under a log, or in the hollow of a tree. While absorbed in these thoughts, he reached the summit of Possum Knob, whence Sam had seen the light issue from the cellar, and over which his path led, and halted Dandy to take his first sight of the Red Lion.

Billows of pine lay beneath him, through which, here and there, a few yards of the old sandy road could be discerned winding, and out of which arose the old tavern with its out-buildings, paddock, and garden—venerable and extensive and red throughout, even to the fence and pig-stye. Rush thought, as he noticed with astonishment the extent of ground the building rambled over, and saw the patches in which it had been built, that each succeeding Decker had left it greater than he had found it, and sighed to think that Oliver the First, the friend of Burr, was not there then, in all his glory, to be manipulated.

He descended and halted under the old sign and surveyed the front. All the doors and windows were closed but those of the one chamber on the upper porch. He rode to the great water-trough. It was empty, and beginning to crack under the action of the sun. He turned Dandy into the paddock, hanging the saddle and bridle on the fence, unlocked the front door, and entered. "The first place to examine," he

thought, "is *the* room," and he ascended to the upper porch and entered it. He found it as the coroner had left it. He took off his coat and made a complete examination. He unlocked the doors and opened the shutters of every room on the porch. He entered the upper hall and continued his search from gallery to gallery until hunger warned him of the flight of time. He looked at his watch, and found the afternoon far spent. He walked quickly to the front porch and into the room for his coat. It was gone, and a ragged one lying across the back of the chair where he had left his own. He hurried down stairs to the lower porch. His lunch was gone—only the paper in which it had been wrapped and a few crusts and crumbs left on the bench. The saddle and bridle were gone from the fence, and Dandy from the paddock.

When he entered the bar of the "Coon," just after sundown, in his shirt-sleeves, tired and covered with dust, he frightened Slugger nearly into a fit, and Sam Kutz, the coon-hunter, who was talking with him, made a rush for the door through sympathetic terror. Mirandy was the only one who retained her self-possession.

"Why, what on the mortal earth has come to you?" she said.

"A little bad luck," Rush answered, taking a chair.

"Where's Dandy?" she inquired anxiously.

"Sit down, all of you," he replied, "and I will tell you about it."

He had passed the morning, he said, in examining the house to see how it would suit, and left his coat in a room on the front porch.

"Which room?" inquired Slugger, "not *the* room?"

"Why," answered Rush, "yes, I believe it was."

"Great Jerusalem!" exclaimed Sam. "What a temptin' of Providence."

"You're a dead man, Mr. Rankin," said Slugger, in a melancholy tone. "I'm sorry for you. You've nigh about eat your last possum."

"I dare say that is true," answered Rush, "as to the possum. Well, listen, if you please. I unsaddled Dandy and hung the bridle and saddle on the fence near the horse-trough."

"Near the horse-trough!" interrupted Slugger, with a look of amazement. "There's the end of them articles; you needn't tell me they're gone."

"You are right," resumed Rush; "they were gone when I came to look for them; and the lunch which Mirandy put up for me was eaten up, and nothing left on the bench but the paper and some crumbs."

"Spirits don't eat," said Sam sententiously; "that's too thin."

"And," resumed Rush, without noticing the remark, "I turned Dandy into the paddock, and *he* was gone, and I came away and left the keys

sticking in one of the corridor doors, and that is the end."

"Well, of all the tricks!" exclaimed Sam. "These city folk do beat thunder."

"You will pay me for Dandy, I suppose?" inquired Mirandy.

"Certainly," said Rush, "if we don't get him again."

"Not what I give for him," she added, "that's my business. I want his real wo'th. Wha's Dandy wo'th, Sam?"

"Why," said Sam, "if there was no spell on the hoss—"

"Never mind your spells," she interrupted, "what's Dandy wo'th?"

"Why," answered Sam, "Dandy's wo'th twenty-five dollars. He's as good a pony as ever jumped a fence; an' they cheated Mrs. Yost when they on'y give her ten. If Dandy was *mine* now, I'd knock off five on account of the myst'ry he's wrapped up in, an' call it twenty."

"Well, well," said Rush, "she shall have what she asks for him, twenty or twenty-five; but I want some one to go back with me early in the morning and help look him up. What do you say, Sam, will you go?"

"What! *me?*" said Sam. "Why, good gracious, Mr. Rankin, I've got to go home to-night, an' I've got to hunt up a lost hog to-morrow. Ask Dannel. Maybe he'll go."

"No, Dannel isn't a-goin'," answered Slugger.

"Come, let's all take a drink," said Rush. "This talking without drinking is dry work. Sam," said he, after he had treated him twice, "I will pay for your supper, bed, and breakfast, and as much as you can drink; and we will take a couple of bottles with us to-morrow; and I will pay you in money besides what you ask, if you will come over and help me."

"That's a big offer," said Sam, "but look at the risk. If you don't ask me to go into the Lion, an' give me a dollar, I don't know but I'll go. I consider I'm a-riskin' my life."

In the morning early they took the path for the Lion. When they reached the top of Possum Knob they saw Dandy grazing in the paddock below, and on coming to the porch saw the saddle and bridle where Rush had left them on the fence, and the lunch on the bench not even untied. Rush went up to the room, and Sam backed into the open space in front to watch him. He entered, and found the ragged garment gone, and his own coat in its place on the back of the chair. He put it on and came out on the porch, and the wonder of Sam was complete.

Without opening any more rooms, having examined all anywhere near the front porch, and all in which it was at all likely the bundle would have been concealed, Rush spent the better part of the day in looking into nooks and odd places

both in the house, outhouses, and barn, and even in hollow logs and stumps in the woods and fields. His hunt was fruitless, and in the evening he mounted Dandy and returned with Sam to Raccoon Hollow.

When Sam returned to the "Coon" the next morning on Dandy, after seeing Rush to the station, he halted in front of the door and, sitting sidewise in the saddle, entered into conversation with Slugger, who came out.

"What do you think'll become of him?" he inquired.

"He's doomed," answered Slugger, gloomily; "he's as good as dead."

"What did it bring the things back fur then?" he asked doubtfully; "that looked friendly like to me."

"To coax him on," answered Slugger, "to git him to stay all night. You see they can't tech a man in daylight; they ain't permitted, nor properly till midnight."

"But takin' the things was calculated to skeer him," said Sam. "If they wanted to coax him, what did they do that fur? That don't consist, you see, Dannel."

"Why," answered Slugger, "you see it made a mistake in that, Sam. A spirit can make a mistake as well as a live man. Why not? They are always a-doin' onaccountable things, and tryin' to rectify 'em. This spirit, when it thought the

thing over, found he'd made a mistake, and brought the plunder back in the night."

"It don't seem to me," said Sam, "that they've got much gumption to act that a way. I have a thunderin' notion to go in and hunt fur that hid bundle. I don't fear no spirit that ain't smarter nor this one. Not in the daytime," he added, seeing the incredulous look on Slugger's face.

"What did the stranger say goin' over, Sam," inquired Mirandy. "Did he put you up to lookin' for that bundle? Seems to me somebody did. You wouldn't a darst to think of such a thing by yourself."

"I darst do many a thing, Miss Mirandy," answered Sam, coloring, "an' I won't tell all he said goin' over. One thing he said, he didn't believe in spirits, nor he don't!"

"He's a idjit to talk that way," interposed Slugger, "after all he's gone through. He's a nat'ral born fool," he added with rising indignation, "that's what *he* is."

CHAPTER VIII.

DECKER OF GILES GOES FISHING WITH A HIGHLAND CHIEF.

THE monotony of life at Rosedow grew less as Madison increased his visits. He passed his Sundays there, and rode over during the week, and was so bright and full of fun that the whole household lit up at his coming. He walked over the grounds with Cousin Della; they fished together on the little lake, and rode on horseback to points of romantic interest, and soon became lovers. The old gentleman was pleased with their intimacy, and favored Madison with his views *in extenso* on the coming fortune, its certainty, its size, and the uses to which it should be put. He read to him the newspaper articles, which were now frequent and generally short and pointed, and which his legal adviser, as he called Pilot, sent to him as they appeared, duly marked with red pencil. These he had Madison copy at his library table and enclose to his father; and soon all Giles County was ablaze with Decker news. The paper at the Court House reproduced the articles, and congratulated the community that

"Old Giles" was not left out in the distribution of Fortune's favors; and intimated that, as a fitting libation to the gods, a portion of the coming gold might be poured out at the Court House in the erection of a "Decker Public Library and Reading Room." "'Shanks,' as we familiarly and playfully styled our now successful countryman, it is understood has been one of the chief instruments in unearthing this hidden treasure, and in dissipating the heavy clouds that have so long obscured the title to this famous fortune. Old Giles raises men. She is proud of her son 'Shanks.'"

As the evidence accumulated of the speedy realization of the fortune, the resistance of William Decker of Giles to the demands of the ladies of the household for money to supply articles of luxury, and to improve the appearance of the house and grounds, grew fainter. The fences were repaired and painted, as was the woodwork of the house inside and out. Bills at the milliner's, dry goods store, and grocery at Giles Court House were run up, and the money laid by for taxes was carried over the mountains into Greenbriar and expended at the celebrated White Sulphur Springs of that county. The married son, who had so savingly managed the farm heretofore, mending the wagons and implements of agriculture himself, now took the mending to the wagon-maker and smith, and made new purchases

that he would not have thought of before the inherited poison began to stir in his blood. So the Deckers of Giles looked up and looked bright, and were the talk of mountain and valley. The girls were belles at the White Sulphur, the mother projected fine matches, the son dreamed of lands of his own, and the father of buying half Giles County and introducing modern improvements and blooded stock.

One day while the family were immersed in these dreams, and were expending their fortune before they had gotten it in, they received a visit from an old man named Lovat, who lived in the mountains. He was tall, with grizzled hair and beard, and of large frame, though thin. He was poor, as all mountain men are, but had about him an appearance of faded gentility both in dress and manner. Decker had long known and respected him, though their paths in life had kept them apart. Madison had put up at his cabin when hunting in the mountains in the winter, and had gone out with him on the chase for bear and deer, and the old man had formed an attachment for him. It was this that had brought him down to the valley to visit Decker. After dinner he proposed to go to the river to fish, and the two old men were soon seated on the bank, with their corks floating on the water.

"Decker," said Lovat, after a time, "the fish don't bite; let me tell you a story."

"I should like to hear one," he answered; "I am fond of stories. We will get no bites. The rain last night has muddied the water and spoiled the fishing."

"Well, sir," said Lovat, "here goes. Once upon a time there lived in the Highlands of Scotland a high and mighty chieftain, called Lord Lovat. He was a friend of the deposed Stuart family, and hated with a holy hatred the Dutchman who sat on the throne in London and lorded it over the three kingdoms, and his clan, as in duty bound, did the same. Well, after a while one of the Stuarts landed in Scotland, and got up an army to fight for the crown. Now Lord Lovat had been to France, and had traveled, and had learned a good deal about the world, and he knew there was no chance for young Stuart; so he refused to join him, and staid at home. But his son, 'The Master of Lovat,' who didn't know as much as his father, though he thought he knew more, sent round the fiery cross, raised a following, and joined Stuart, and, after they were whipped, fled to France. The English, when they found they couldn't catch the young man, sent soldiers to Dounie Castle, who burned it and captured the old one, and took him to London. The House of Lords tried him for helping Stuart, and, not being able to get any evidence against him, became highly exasperated and condemned him to death on general principles. As they

were driving him back to the Tower in a carriage, the crowd about it hooting at and insulting him was so great that the horses couldn't go out of a walk, and Lord Lovat lay back and took no notice and scorned them, until a woman passed near the carriage window and called out :

" 'Let me see the ugly, old Scotch dog,' when the old man put his gray head out of the window and answered :

" 'Well, look at him, you ugly, old English b—h.'

" This speech so pleased his clansmen when it got to the Highlands, that it in a measure consoled them for the loss of their old chief's head, which was hacked off by a blundering Englishman the next day.

" His son, who came to his title and estates, made up with the Dutchman and put his eldest son in the English navy as lieutenant, and this inconsiderate chap fell in love with a beautiful girl in the mountains of the North Riding of York, where he was trout-fishing on leave from his vessel, and married her. He wrote his father that his wife was as beautiful as an angel, and as good as one ; and begged his pardon for not having mentioned the matter before he married ; and received a reply from the lord's attorney, cutting off his allowance and all further intercourse. He thereupon resigned from the navy, and emigrated to New York, got a clerkship, was very happy for

two years, and died, leaving my grandmother in want. The English consul wrote to Lord Lovat, and his attorney replied, requesting him to pay over to her quarterly a handsome allowance and draw on him. I have heard my grandmother say that one day when she called for this money the consul informed her that the allowance was stopped; and, as my father was prosperous in business, and the money not needed, the matter was dropped.

"When I was about fifteen years old my father purchased a large and valuable estate in Jersey and retired from business, his health having be come infirm. Not long after this, he read a notice in the paper aloud at the breakfast-table, stating that Lord Lovat had died at a great old age, and had left no heirs in Scotland, and saying that a certain lawyer in New York was hunting up American heirs. My father put himself in communication with this lawyer and furnished him money to go to Scotland. He wrote back encouraging letters from time to time, and drew drafts on my father for court expenses. He sent him accounts of the progress of the suit, and papers were mailed him every few months by some one in New York, containing short articles concerning the great Lord Lovat case, and the approaching installation of the American heir. At last a letter came announcing that the case was won, and covering the decision of the court

'that, on payment of the succession tax,' the amount of which was stated in the decision, 'the title and estates would become the property of Charles Stuart, Lord Lovat, now of the State of New Jersey in the United States of America.' The following mail brought a draft at ten days' sight for the amount to cover this tax, and pay the lawyer's expenses back to New York.

"My father had an attack of gout, and was in bed when this momentous letter reached him. He sent for a lawyer to the county town, and instructed him to prepare a mortgage, raise the sum called for, and meet the draft. This was effected with some difficulty, as the sum was thought rather heavy for the estate to bear. The family awaited further news with great anxiety, and in due course of mail a letter was received from the attorney at Edinburgh acknowledging the receipt of notice of payment of the draft, and saying that that evening he would carry the money in gold, as required by law, to the office of the Clerk of the Court, and pay it over.

"This was the last that was ever heard of him. My father died in the belief that he had been robbed and murdered, and his body thrown into the Leith. My grandmother thought his body could be found if sought for in the American colony in Paris; and my mother oscillated between the two opinions. I took my father's view as the most dreadful, and at the same time consoling, and ven-

erated the memory of the lost attorney. My father succumbed to a violent fit of his disease, brought on by disappointment. My grandmother soon followed him, longing in her last years to get back to her native mountain home in the North Riding, and my mother and I expended the fragments of my father's estate in feeing a new attorney, and I the best years of my life in haunting his office. If you will come up into the Highlands, Decker," he concluded, getting up from his seat, and wrapping the fishline about his pole, "you will be royally received at Castle Dounie by your humble servant, Charles Stuart, Lord Lovat, the American heir."

The two men walked to the house without exchanging a word; and Lovat mounted his pony and rode back to his home in the mountains.

Mr. Decker was absorbed in meditation during the evening, and the following morning rode to the court-house and ordered the shopkeepers with whom they dealt to make out their bills, and informed them that he would pay as soon as he was able, and would henceforth do a cash business.

That evening at supper he informed the family of what he had done, and declared that a reign of the strictest economy must set in at once. A battle royal opened on the spot, but the old gentleman was prepared for it and fought vigorously. Tears were shed, but he was obdurate. Reasons

were demanded for this sudden change of heart, but he would give none. It was his will, and it must be obeyed. He instituted the most galling economies, himself cut splinters and rolled up scraps of paper to save matches, and, altogether, behaved in such an unaccountable manner that his family settled down to the opinion that his brain was softening, and went about in fear and sorrow.

But the condition of the Rosedow Decker was quite different—the very reverse of that of his co-heir in Giles. Fed by the items in the papers and the letters of Pilot, he became more and more confident; and his mind was heated by the coming prosperity which he now felt almost within his grasp. Pilot had communicated to him in confidence that but seven heirs were able to prove their descent from the far-off ancestor. Of these he represented two—his own and the one he had purchased; the Giles County heir, one; a gentleman of wealth then in the city, whose family had preceded him to Europe, held the fourth, and was in negotiation for shares fifth and sixth, held in Philadelphia, by a gentleman who inherited by father and mother, both Deckers. The seventh share was held in New Jersey, and a gentleman in the city, Mr. Rush, was in negotiation for it. That he had received a proposition from the Bank directors which required the assent of all the proved-up heirs, and was busy in gaining their

signatures to a power of attorney authorizing him to settle on the basis proposed. That, while he had not shown the directors' offer to any one, he had sounded them; and was quite confident, assuming the assent of himself and Decker of Giles, that all would sign, excepting the Philadelphia gentleman, who was intractable and would sign nothing. He hoped the negotiations for his shares would succeed, as an immediate settlement could thus be secured, as he would see when he laid before him his recent letters from Holland. Unfortunately an inkling of their contents had leaked out, and had caused the Philadelphian to raise his price. His first terms were sixty thousand, and he had raised to seventy-five. The gentleman offered him fifty. The reduction of the heirs to so small a number had caused the first great rise. In the strictest confidence he would say that the directors had agreed to make the first shipment to New York, of five millions, within ten days after the receipt of the legal and certified acceptance of their proposition. This must be kept perfectly secret until the Philadelphian is bought out; if he should hear it he would raise his terms to millions. He requested him to forward without loss of time an inclosed power of attorney to Decker of Giles for signature, authorizing him to accept or reject terms offered by the bank, and saying, by the time he would receive an answer, he would be at Rosedow with all the Holland papers.

"Madie," he called to the young gentleman who was playing croquet on the lawn with his lady-love, "I wish to see you immediately in the library." He had received the last communication a few minutes before.

"Madie," he said when they were seated, "I have this moment received a communication of the very greatest importance to your father and myself. It is absolutely necessary that he should without delay sign a power of attorney authorizing Mr. Pilot to act for him in accepting or rejecting terms of settlement. Do you think there is any fear of his declining?"

"I fear there is," he answered. "I have a letter from home saying that my father has forbidden the fortune to be mentioned, and is curtailing expenses in every direction. In that mood I hardly think he would sign anything concerning it."

"Do you think," said the old gentleman, "a letter from you would be likely to persuade him?"

"I fear not," answered Madison.

Mr. Decker rose from his chair, and paced the floor in agitation.

"What a misfortune!" he exclaimed. "Do you think, if you went down in person, you could induce him to sign?" he added, stopping before him.

"I might," was the answer, "but I am by no means sure. When he takes a set, he is hard to move."

"Like all the Deckers," said the old gentleman. "What a stiff-necked race! What an unfortunate family! Madie," he said, after some thought, resuming his seat, "will you go down to Giles for me?"

"With great pleasure," he answered; "I suppose Mr. Bronson can spare me."

"I will write him at once," said Decker; and he addressed him a note, asking leave for Madison on important family business affecting them both.

"Drive over immediately," said he, handing him the letter, "and come back prepared to take the night train. Not an hour is to be lost."

Madison departed on his mission, and Decker sat down and thought anxiously over the situation. What a calamity if Madie should fail. Right on the eve of realization, after generations of expectation and hope, a thick-headed Decker was probably about to ruin everything by interposing a dangerous delay. It was delay that killed all great enterprises. The bank, angered by the failure to accept their proposition, might begin the fight afresh, and throw the settlement into the next generation. An urgent letter from himself assuring him of the importance of instant action, together with the influence of his son, surely ought to move him. But perhaps he will refuse to listen to his son, or pay any regard to his letter. What then? He has for-

bidden the subject to be even mentioned, and is economizing, Madie says. "Maybe he is in financial difficulties. In that case money in hand will move him. Money in hand will move anybody; it is the great lever. We must buy him out; that is the road out of our dilemma. I will tell him candidly that I can buy the Philadelphia shares for seventy-five thousand, and will offer him at the same rate for his. It is a very large sum to risk, and it must be raised by sale of my bonds; but there *is* no risk, and it will come back in millions within ninety days. I will do it. The bold win the prizes of life."

On the second day following, a juvenile Decker of Giles was prancing about the front yard on a stick steed, when he suddenly dismounted, and, rushing to the house, called out:

"Here comes Madie a-gallopin' up on a spotted horse."

A simultaneous rush was made to the front gate, and when Madie alighted he was hugged to suffocation.

"Where's father?" he inquired, as soon as he was released and they had started for the house.

"Daddy's gone to the river," answered the cavalier who had had the glory of announcing the arrival, "to catch some fish for supper."

"We live now, my dear," said his mother, "on fish and cornbread. Your papa says people that haven't paid their taxes and store-bills are swin-

dlers if they eat white bread. You can't think what a state he's got into. He's stopped his weekly paper and the *Ladies' Magazine*, and has actually sold the girls' pony. We are all on the high road to ruin, that's certain; and nobody can do anything with him. I am *so* glad you have come."

"Well, mother," he said, "I never was so fish-hungry in my life; and *pone*—girls, I am dying for pone. Cook an extra one for me for supper. Nobody knows how to cook out of old Virginia, and, as for pone, they don't even know what the word means. Hurrah for old Virginny! Ole Virginny never tire! How glad I am to get home!"

"Why, Madie," said his sister, "you are as lively as ever. I thought the Northerners would have sobered you down by this time."

"Madie will always be Madie," said his mother, "and I am glad of it. But, my son, what about this fortune? I am afraid there is nothing in it; your father has given it up completely long ago, and we daren't speak of it before him, and we didn't use to talk of anything else. The girls are very nigh crazy with disappointment, and I must say it goes hard with me too."

"I for one," said the eldest daughter, "am not nigh crazy about it, whatever the others are."

"Oh, gracious," exclaimed her sister, "you took it worse than anybody."

"No, she didn't, Madie," interposed the cavalier,

"for I took it worse. Because I was to get a pony and a gun when it came."

"And you shall have a gun, whether it comes or not," said Madie, patting him on the head, "for I will send you one as soon as you can use it."

"I can use one now," he answered. "I will go up in the mountains to old Lovat's, where you went, and shoot bear, and a painter too, if she comes about me."

"To be sure you will," answered Madie, "and deer, too, plenty of them."

"By the way, Madie," said his sister, "old Lovat was down and dined with us since you left."

"Was he, indeed?" he said; "I am glad of it. How did you like him?"

"Why, he's a queer old man," she answered. "He addressed mamma with the manner of a gentleman, and told me he had come down from the mountains to bring luck to the house. He and papa went down to fish, and the first thing we knew we saw him riding up the road without saying good-by to a soul. It strikes me he and papa had a quarrel on the river, though I can't think about what, for papa didn't go with him to the gate, and hasn't mentioned him since."

"Yes, my dear," said the mother, "and though none of you noticed it, I did; it was on the evening after he was here that your poor father turned so queer. I have often thought since, that the old

man cast a spell on the house in place of bringing it luck."

"Well," said Madison, "he's a good man, and true, and I'll go up to Castle Dounie and take a bear-hunt with him if I can before I leave."

"Castle what?" inquired his sister.

"Dounie," repeated Madie. "The first time I met him was on Laurel Ridge. We were both after deer, and were close together in the bushes and rocks before we saw each other."

"'I was ready cocked to shoot you, young man,' he said, 'I heard you coming through the bush.'

"'Who are you?' said I, getting a little on my guard.

"'Who am I?' he repeated. 'Why, who should I be but a lord?' and he laughed quietly.

"'What's the name of your castle?' said I, humoring the joke.

"'Dounie,' he answered; 'come and dine with me.' And that's the way we struck up an acquaintance."

"And what does Castle Dounie look like?"

"It's a warm, double log cabin," he answered, "with a big fire-place that blazes with pine logs in winter, skins of bear over the beds, chairs, floor, and walls. Plenty to eat—of game, that is—and a famous natural fountain of soft water coming out of the rocks close by."

"Has he any family?" she inquired.

"None," he answered; "he told me there was

a curse on the Lovats, and he wanted the family to die out. It was he that put me in the notion of leaving home. It was while we were sitting at the fire at night, the day I killed the panther. He had been looking at the coals a long time, when he said:

"'Boy, you will grow into a mere hunter and loafer, and in a few years be a good-for-nothing, pleasant fellow, if you stay in Giles. Strike out. It's a pity to see an eye that can outlook a hungry panther grow dim with dissipation'—but there comes father," and he ran down the river lawn to meet him.

That evening after supper Madison handed his father a letter from Rosedow, which he read to himself carefully and thoughtfully. The ladies, who knew it was touching the fortune, in a fever of excitement to learn its contents, sat about the table sewing.

"What do you think of the fortune, Mad?" he said presently.

"They say at Rosedow," he answered, "that your share is worth millions."

"Yes, so says this letter," he continued, "but what do you say? You are not a fool, and I want your opinion, and the grounds on which you have formed it, if you have an opinion."

"Well, to tell the truth," Madison answered, "I have no opinion formed on my own knowledge of the case. Every report that comes to Rosedow

is most flattering, and I would believe that they were true and reliable, and of course I want to believe them; but I have a bad opinion of the source from which they come. Mind you, I know nothing against Pilot, and Mr. Decker trusts him absolutely, but his expression and manner displease me, and personally, mind, I wouldn't trust him as far as I could sling a cat by the tail. That's my private opinion of Pilot."

"That settles it," said his father. "The instinct of a gentleman never lies."

"But, my goodness, papa," broke in the daughter, "you won't throw away the chance of a fortune because Madie is jealous of Mr. Pilot. Madie, you know you're jealous about Miss Della Decker, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"Madie, my dear sister, might once have been a little so," said Madison, "but is so no longer; he has the inside track there, and can distance Pilot any day if he wants to, not saying that he wishes to distance anybody; and his opinion of the attorney is not based, as you insinuate, on the tender passion. I hope he is all right, but I distrust him."

"Judgment has been passed on Pilot," said the father. "Let him rest. And now hear what Mr. Decker says. He wishes me to sign a power of attorney to Pilot to hasten the settlement of the estate, says my share is worth millions, and

settlement may be deferred a generation, if time is lost. I will be a millionaire in a few months in case I sign. And if I will not sign he will give me thirty-seven thousand five hundred dollars for executing a transfer of my share ; and that if I sell to him he will pay in United States bonds or cash, as I may prefer. Now, what do you all think about it ? "

"We will be rich in Giles," said the mother, "with thirty-seven thousand, William ; I say take it."

"I agree with mother," said the eldest son, "and twenty will buy all the old land back."

"I go for the millions," said the daughter. "How will we feel, if it all turns out true in six months ? "

"If ! " said Madison. "*If* Pilot were honest, I'd say so too. The old gentleman will buy of others if he doesn't buy of father. I am sure of that, so it is the same to him. I vote with mother."

"Thousands in hand in Giles are better than millions in the fog in Holland," said the father; "bring me the pen and ink, mother; the die is cast."

CHAPTER IX.

DECKER OF ROSEDOW IS FISHED FOR AND CAUGHT.

AS Madison approached Rosedow on his return from Giles, he saw the iron gates swing open and Mr. Decker's carriage come out and turn down the hill. It contained two gentlemen who were laughing gayly; and, as it passed him, he recognized in one of them Mr. Pilot; the other was a stranger.

They had passed the morning in examining and discussing the Holland papers, or rather their attached translations, with Mr. Decker, and in discussions and negotiations.

"Mr. Decker," said Pilot, on being shown into the library, "permit me to introduce Mr. Rush of the city, one of the celebrities of Wall Street."

"Happy to make your acquaintance, Mr. Rush," said Decker. "If I mistake not, you are the gentleman in negotiation for the Jersey share."

"I was on the point of closing with him yesterday," answered Rush, "in the lobby of the Fifth Avenue, when Mr. Outcalt Decker stepped up and I introduced them. I was called away for a time,

and when I rejoined them the Jersey gentleman informed me that he had concluded to nearly double his terms; and the negotiation was broken off. He had not only decided on the same price as the Philadelphia gentleman, but had assumed his position as to the power of attorney, saying he would keep his hand from pen and paper."

"Why, this is very unfortunate," said Mr. Decker.

"I have more ill news to give you," said Pilot. "The gentleman in negotiation with Outcalt Decker for his two shares has left for Europe to rejoin his family, and has given his broker orders not to go above thirty thousand, and Decker declares he will not touch it."

"But for this," said Rush, "I would have bought at the advance price, after Mr. Pilot showed me the recent letters from Holland; but delays are dangerous, Mr. Decker, delays are dangerous."

"I showed him the bank's proposal," said Pilot, "expecting he would buy all three shares and get us out of trouble."

"I would buy them all most gladly, Mr. Pilot," answered Rush, "as I have already informed you, but for the heavy amounts I already have out on margins. I dare not run my bank account down too low."

"Very well," answered Pilot, "you are the best judge of your own business. But we are

losing time. I came up to inform Mr. Decker fully of the state of affairs. I will hand you the Holland advices in the order of their dates. This is the letter of Mr. Van Velsen, advocate, my Amsterdam associate, to the consul, with a translation attached; this, the letter of the American consul, Mr. Obadiah Jones; and this, Mr. Van Velsen's last letter, enclosing this most important paper, the proposition of the Bank of Amsterdam to the heirs of Hendrik Dekker. They need no explanation that I can give. They speak for themselves."

Mr. Decker read them in their order carefully and laid them on the table, took off his glasses, and turned to his attorney.

"Mr. Pilot," he said, "this good news in its certainty and its magnitude is overwhelming. The total must be tremendous, if the monthly shipments are so large. But I do not see the total stated."

"They could not give it with interest still running," said Pilot. "Up to this time, we have been unable to get from them the rate of interest we could expect. In fact, like all the Hollanders, they have been exceedingly close, until the recent decision forced them to speak."

"I have made calculations of compound interest on the principal at various rates," said Mr. Decker, "and at five per cent. the amount is almost incredible, but there will be a reduction of

perhaps an eighth of one per cent. for insurance and transfer."

"I think," said Pilot, "in one way or another, they will manage to cut us down a quarter."

"An eighth is as much," interposed Rush, "as I will submit to, if I become interested. I have paid for the transfer of gold both ways, and understand the rates."

"I hope you will buy the Jersey share, Mr. Rush," said Decker. "You will be a valuable ally."

"I will buy," he answered, "if we can get the power signed within a day or two, not otherwise. Mr. Pilot informs me that Van Velsen is alarmed at the delay."

"His letter, with the translation, is among the number I handed you, Mr. Decker," said Pilot.

"I overlooked it then," said Decker, putting on his glasses and turning over the letters before him. "It is not here, sir," he added, turning to Pilot.

"I took it out to read on the cars," said Pilot, "and thought I had put it back. I must have put it in my pocket." "With this, he drew from his inner breast-pocket several envelopes and looked them over. "Yes," he added, with an air of satisfaction, "here it is," and, opening it, he handed it to Decker.

"Why, he writes," said Decker, running over the letter with an alarmed look, "that he has reason to believe, from a hint he has received from

one of the directors, a friend of his, that unless a cablegram reaches the bank by the first *proximo*, announcing the acceptance of its proposition, an appeal will be taken. And here we are," he added, addressing Pilot, "close on to the end of the month. What is to be done?"

"I am a business man, Mr. Decker," said Rush, interposing, "and can see there is but one thing to be done, and that without loss of time. It is to buy the outstanding shares and cable the bank."

"But who is to buy them?" asked Decker in a despairing tone.

"I'll take one," answered Rush, "if you two gentlemen can manage the other two."

"Professional etiquette would prevent me buying," said Pilot, "if I had the money, which I honestly confess I have not. They have risen out of my reach."

"I have just bought a share," said Decker. "I received a telegram yesterday from young Mr. Decker, from Lynchburg, Virginia, saying he was bringing on the transfer of his father's interest at the same rate at which these are offered."

"Then, Mr. Decker," said Rush, "you are in too deep water to back out; take my advice and wade through. That is sound business advice, depend upon it."

"But I haven't the money," said Decker.

"A note secured by mortgage is as good as

money in Wall Street," said Rush. "I'll advance money on it, if that is all that is wanted. If my margins push me, I can get the money in half an hour, any time, by depositing them with my banker. Neither of the shareholders will leave before the afternoon train to-morrow,; at least, my man won't, and he told me he thought Outcalt would not leave in the morning, though he spoke of doing so. At any rate, he will be found at the Fifth Avenue to-night."

"But we haven't time to arrange it to-day," said Decker, greatly agitated.

"Why, as to that, if you wish to make the arrangement," said Pilot, "there is plenty of time to execute the papers and catch the evening train. You will have to send your coachman for a notary, and while he is gone I can draw up the mortgage and the note, and Mr. Rush his check."

"Gentlemen," said Decker, his hand trembling as he laid it on the table to steady it, "I will be risking about my all, excepting Rosedow."

"I never risk any thing," said Rush. "I am one of the Wall Street men who never lose. I wouldn't give the Jerseyman a hundred dollars for his interest, unless the bank can be cabled before the first; and, if it can be cabled to-morrow, I'll buy, if he doubles the price on me."

Mr. Decker rose from his chair, crossed the room, and pulled the bell-cord.

"Send the coachman in the phaeton," he said

to the servant who answered it, "to town for Mr. Schultz, and if he is not in his office tell him to bring out some other notary. And tell him to drive fast."

He then took from his safe the deeds of his city property, and laid them on the table, and requested Mr. Pilot to take a seat and draw up the mortgage. Decker then began to pace the floor, and Rush drew up to the table, and, as Pilot was copying into the mortgage the description in one of the deeds, he glanced over the consideration in the others, and footed the amounts up.

"Mr. Decker," he said, "the consideration in these deeds is hardly sufficient to make the note what we Wall Street men call gilt-edged. Have you any objection to adding Rosedow to the mortgage?"

"Yes, sir, I have," he answered abruptly. "If the city property is not sufficient, the negotiation may drop. I will not mortgage my daughter's home."

"The city property has risen in value, Mr. Rush," said Pilot, alarmed at the change of tone in Decker, "and is ample. Take my word for it."

"I will take your word," answered Rush, "or Mr. Decker's word, for a million. Could I ask you for a glass of wine, Mr. Decker?" he said, rising. "I am in the bad habit of taking one at this time in the day."

"Come out to the dining-room, gentlemen,"

said Decker. "I have some fine old brandy that you may prefer to wine. I can recommend it."

They took a glass of brandy, and Pilot, excusing himself, returned to his writing, leaving Decker and Rush at the sideboard.

"Mr. Decker," said Rush, "I think I will go to Amsterdam on the next steamer. My interest will exceed, many times, all my property in Wall Street, and, as neither Mr. Pilot nor Mr. Van Velsen is a financier, I fear the bank may overcharge us on the transfer account, if some one is not there who understands these matters. It is highly important that some one of us should be there before the first shipment, as that will establish the rate for all subsequent ones. Whether they charge a twelfth of one per cent., which I consider ample, on so vast a sum, or an eighth, will make a big difference to me and to us all, and I assure you, sir, I couldn't sleep in my bed unless I knew we were properly represented there before the first shipment."

"I am glad you think of going," answered Decker. "Be cautious, however, not to do any thing that may cause the least delay. I shall be very uneasy until the shipments commence. I wish a cablegram sent to me at each important step. You will favor me so far?"

"Most gladly," answered Rush, "and nothing shall be done that will in any way harm us; you may be sure of that. The papers of acceptance

must be sent on the same steamer that I go on, as it will be the first following the cablegram. I would offer to be the bearer of them, but that I think it safer to send them by express to Van Velsen. Men are delayed by sickness or what not, and the express never gets sick. I believe I will try another glass of your exquisite brandy."

"Certainly," answered Decker. "I will join you," and they returned to the library in harmony and fine spirits.

The mortgage and note drawn, Rush drew his check on Belmont for seventy-five thousand, to the order of Mr. Samuel Decker, who indorsed it to Mr. John Pilot, who was to make the purchase. The note was drawn at ninety days, with six per cent. interest, Rush assuring Decker that it might run on a year if he liked. The notary arrived and took Decker's acknowledgment to the mortgage; the papers were passed and a hasty luncheon taken; Decker saw the gentlemen in their carriage, and pressed their hands warmly after they were seated, and the carriage was driven rapidly out of the iron gate, the gentlemen within it in a fine flow of spirits, and down the hill, passing Madison coming up, and on to the station to catch the evening train, Rush tearing to small pieces his check on Belmont and letting them flutter out of the carriage window as they drove gaily along.

The next morning a letter was mailed to Rosedow inclosing the transfer of two shares in the

Decker estate, from John Outcalt Decker, of Philadelphia, duly acknowledged, and a copy of a cablegram said to have been sent that morning to the president and directors of the Bank of Holland, and notice of the purchase by Mr. Rush of the Jersey share. The note and mortgage were placed in the hands of a broker in Wall Street, who, after due investigation, bought them ; and the two gentlemen, after deducting fifty dollars for Barney, divided the proceeds.

This gentleman was taken into the office as clerk; and, not having much work to engage his attention, whiled away the time in writing the signatures of innumerable Deckers of every imaginable forename, which occupation seemed to exercise over him an irresistible fascination. He slept in a small back room opening into the office, and at a reduced price occupied a seat at the second table at Yost's. He decorated the walls of the office with maps of the Decker property in the city, showing it in a state of nature, covered with primeval forests and occupied by an Indian family—in the condition he supposed it to have appeared at the death of Hendrik Dekker, with a flock of diminutive, tow-headed Dekkers playing hide-and-seek in a cabbage patch—and as it now was, covered with stately buildings. He so identified himself with the family that he dreamed, and almost brought himself to believe, that he was a Decker by birth,

and had been exchanged in the cradle. He was proud of his promotion, and began the study of the law, and would have been quite content but for the names of Thaddeus and John Outcalt Decker, that rose up at times before his mental vision. In his waking hours he banished these obtrusive signatures by a resort to the "Two Goats" around the corner; but in the visions of the night they came in person and disturbed his sleep.

During the absence of his employers one day and night, Barney had turned the corner so frequently that he woke up late the following morning with a headache. He arranged the office and unlocked the door; and, after turning the corner a couple of times in quick succession, found himself so ill that he retired to his bed in the back room, leaving the door slightly ajar. Soon after, Pilot and Rush entered and fell into conversation.

"When Barney comes from breakfast," said Rush, "send him out on a long errand. I want an hour or so with you; we must talk matters over a little."

"I am feeling disturbed about the situation at Rosedow," said Pilot. "The old gentleman is getting very uneasy and, I fear, suspicious."

"Who cares how he gets?" answered Rush. "The old beggar can do nothing."

"I am not so sure of that," said Pilot; "he had a dangerous look the day you spoke to him of

including Rosedow in the mortgage. He'll bite, if he gets his blood up."

"Bite if he gets his blood up," echoed Rush. "Why, what on earth can he do? He hasn't stirred from the house since he learned the Bank of Amsterdam had taken an appeal, and he can't; it broke him down. And, if he tried, what harm can he do us?"

"I don't see that he has any proof," answered Pilot. "The notary heard nothing of the check, nor did he know anything of the negotiation."

"Certainly not," said Rush; "no check passed. I loaned you bonds which you paid over to Outcalt. I needed my money back, being pushed, and sold the note and mortgage. We have done no wrong. The matter is very simple; the old man may swear to what he likes. He has no witnesses to anything unless he hunts up Thaddeus and Outcalt Decker; and he'll have a good time finding them."

"He might find Barney," said Pilot.

"I'll put Barney where he will be hard to find, in case the old man stirs—as hard to find as his old friends, Thaddeus and Outcalt."

At this remark Barney trembled on his cot.

"Now, what about Hollanda's bonds?" inquired Rush. "What do you think of our chances there?"

"She is interested in the case, of course," answered Pilot, "but will not take the hint to buy.

She says if it comes to any thing, she will have enough and more from her own interest. We may as well give her up."

"In that case," said Rush, "there is nothing more to be done. We may as well give the Decker family a rest, and turn our attention to some other enterprise."

"I think," said Pilot, "we had better turn the family over to Barney to squeeze dry. A circular letter making an assessment of three dollars on each share will be popular, and reach a number of poor devils that the ten-dollar call was too heavy for. It will pay the running expenses of the office, at least, and may serve to open up another vein like Rosedow. The fools are not all dead yet."

"I will put an item in the *Evening News*," said Rush, "insinuating that Decker, of Rosedow, is going mad on account of the appeal. It can do no harm, and that shall be my parting shot. I will then wash my hands of the detestable family. I am sick of them—sick of Thaddeus; sick of John Outcalt; sick even of Barney, for he is one of them."

"Exchanged in the cradle," thought Barney, as he lay trembling with fear lest they should discover him.

CHAPTER X.

THE COON-HUNTER AND THE GHOST.

YOST occasionally passed the office of Pilot after dark, and turning the corner sought, like Barney, rest and relaxation from the cares of life at the Two Goats. A few minutes after he had entered one evening he was followed by Rush, who invited him into the small back room, unoccupied at the time, and, seating himself, ordered refreshments.

"Yost," said he, after they had passed some time in conversation and drinking, and the ice between them had been broken, "suppose we resume the conversation we had on the evening before I took lodgings at 501?"

"I am agreeable if you are," answered Yost.

"Well," resumed Rush, "I said then that I didn't recognize the handwriting of the fragment of a letter you showed me, when in fact I did."

"I knew you did," answered Yost, "very well."

"Yes," said Rush, "you trapped me very artfully with your address at the bottom of a letter

that had no bottom. It was not bad. I would have been proud of it myself."

"How do you know the letter had no bottom?" inquired Yost.

"Ah, that's telling; and before answering questions we must agree to be candid on both sides. Now, Yost, this must be settled before we go on. Are we to work in company or continue to work apart?"

"I have not been working, as you call it," answered Yost, "but I understand what you are driving at, and the long and the short of it is that if you tell me what you know about the writer I will tell you what I know."

"Will you divide the bundle even?" asked Rush.

"What bundle?"

"The bundle that Isaac Rinemond hid the night he fell from the porch of the Red Lion," answered Rush.

"If I get the bundle," said Yost, "I will give it to the heirs of Rinemond. If they choose to give me any thing, well and good; if not, let them keep it."

"Suppose he had no heir," said Rush, "what then?"

"Why, then, if that is so," answered Yost, "it puts a different face on the matter. Then I suppose finders will be keepers."

"Just so," said Rush. "I can prove that he

had no heir, and no trusted friend beside myself."

"You think I know where the bundle is hidden, Rush, but you are mistaken."

"I think no such thing," he answered, "but you know the most likely hiding-places about the Red Lion, and you knew of his movements, and if any one can find it you are most likely the man. I have been to Benvelt, and have read the letter without an end and without an address, and all the coroner's proceedings. Now, if you tell me all that you left out at the investigation, I will tell all I know about Rinemond."

"You hunted for the bundle at the Red Lion, of course?" inquired Yost.

"Of course," answered Rush.

"I never did," said Yost. "I thought the heirs might look for it themselves when they turned up. I have no particular fancy for hunting up what the dead have hidden."

"A little superstitious, perhaps," said Rush. "I think that is what they call such discrimination in favor of the dead."

"You may call it what you like," answered Yost, "but everybody's got it, more or less."

"I think," said Rush, "I may flatter myself I am entirely free from it. When a man is dead, he's dead, and there's an end of him."

"I don't know certain as to that, nor you either," answered Yost. "But to come back to

your proposition. I told every thing I knew at the investigation, but not all I thought; for there was no call for it. I heard a noise at the back door, after I went to bed, and thought he was going out. But I soon fell asleep, and heard nothing more until I woke up in the night. Whether the noise was made by him or not, I am doubtful. But I think he went out. And I am pretty sure, if I went down to the Red Lion, I could find the bundle, for I know every corner in the outhouses and stables; but he might have buried it in the garden, and then I don't say. The rains would have removed all signs."

"I believe you have told all you know," answered Rush, "and now for my part of the bargain; and I will be perfectly candid with you, for if we are to do any thing we must understand each other. I am the only man Rinemond ever confided his story to. He was the cashier of a bank, and trusted me with his money to bet on the rise and fall of stock in Wall Street, as he would have lost his position if he had bet himself. It was a secret between us, and it was this that made us fast friends. Of course, he paid me a percentage, but I left it in his hands, and had never drawn it out, and it went into new deals, as my share in them. The market became unsettled and dangerous, and we had withdrawn and were waiting for a change before resuming operations, when one night he came to my room in great

agitation. He said the president of the bank, through a broker, was feeding a margin on stocks that were falling heavily day by day, and was exhausting the bank reserve to keep it up, and that, if a turn in the market did not come in a day or two, there would be nothing left, and his certificate of deposit would be waste-paper.

"'Rush,' he said, 'I will not stand by and see the foundation swept from under me that I have built up with such labor. I am not like other men; I have no family or friends to fall back on, and I must look out for myself. Come,' he said after a pause, 'I'll do what I have never done yet; I will tell you my story.

"'The first recollection I have of myself,' he went on, 'was dodging the wheels of carriages and carts in the Jews' quarter in Amsterdam, a little, ragged chap, dirty and uncared for. I do not remember my mother, but my father I have a faint recollection of, as well as of the dirty little room we lay in at night, for in the day he was absent at some work, and I was on the street. He was a sallow little man, and his dress was, if possible, more greasy and tattered than my own. He must have had regular employment, for he always brought something to eat home at night, and he had breakfast early in the morning, after which we went out, and he locked the door and walked off, leaving me to forage for dinner in the gutters. He was a downhearted man, and seldom

spoke to me, but he treated me kindly, and I have a pitiful memory of him. One night I waited for him until I fell asleep on the steps, but he never came back. I returned for a night or two and slept outside the door, and then wandered into the city and became lost.

"'The next thing I remember, I was standing on the seashore, watching a man wading in from a boat with a basket of fish on his head. How I got there, I know not. I recall a collection of huts near the water, a little church, the ringing of the bell, a small man in a black gown who taught me to read and cipher a little; and then comes another blank, and I see myself on the deck of a ship, knocked down by a slap from the cook, with a vague recollection of having been picked up at sea, thirsty and hungry. From this dates my continuous memory of the past. I was assistant to the ship's cook, and in my leisure hours resumed my writing and ciphering for company to pass the time; a boy must be occupied with something. A young sailor who told me he had been drugged and crimped, seeing me at this, took an interest in me and helped me over hard places, and I became in time a proficient in both exercises. I voyaged on this and other ships until I suppose I was about eighteen years old—how old of, course, I don't know—and had saved a little money, when we put into this harbor, and I got a clerkship at a small shipchandler's near

the wharf. From this I rose gradually to my present position. And I will not,' he added, rising to his feet, 'stand by and see myself robbed."

"The next day a boy brought me a note from him saying he would be at my rooms at midnight, and asking if I would be in and receive him. I answered in the affirmative, and at the appointed time he came.

"'Rush,' he said, 'I am on my way to the Central station, to take one of the earliest trains. Where I shall go, I have not determined. I shall think it over and decide as I go down, perhaps take the first one that pulls out. I have here,' tapping his breast-pocket, 'the last bundle of unregistered bonds the president has left in the vault. If I had not taken it to-night, he would take it to-morrow, and day after to-morrow the bank will break. Do you want what is due you out?'

"'No,' I answered, 'don't break the bundle here.'

"'Well,' he said, 'you can trust me. I will write as soon as I reach a safe harbor. I shall not go far. This bundle,' again tapping it with his finger, 'contains many times as much as the bank owes us both. I had no time when I took it to stand by and count it out. Moments were precious, and there was no time for ceremony; besides it is simple wreckage; all will go to the bottom in a few hours. There will be pursuit, of

course. Assist in throwing it off the track, and we will divide the bundle when the wind goes down and the sea gets calm. Use the newspapers. I will give you one pointer before I start —I am *not* going across the water or to Canada. It will soon blow over. You will help?'

"'Yes,' I answered, 'but don't address me here. Address me at the *Evening News!*'

"'Good-by,' he answered, and walked out.

"You know the rest. He was the only one that went to the bottom. The bank and all connected with it floated. The next day the stocks rebounded and went high up. The president quietly made good the missing bonds, and said nothing about them. The bank people said, when any one inquired for Cook, that he had resigned and gone west."

"Cook was his real name, then?" said Yost, "and not Rinemond."

"Neither was his real name," answered Rush; "he never knew his real name. They called him 'Cook' on shipboard, and he began to sign it that way, and kept it up until he registered that evening at the Red Lion."

"He was never married?" inquired Yost.

"Surely not," answered Rush. "If you doubt it, I will name the bank, and you will find he had no wife and no relatives. You may go to his boarding-house and hear the same. He has left no heir, and the bank won't acknowledge a loss,

and has met with none. The president made it up gambling on the bank's money. You may take your half of the bundle with a clear conscience."

"Well," said Yost, "I'll go in. When shall we go down to the Lion and hunt it up?"

"Thursday, if it will suit you," answered Rush; "prepare to stay two weeks, if need be. Barney and I are going out to beat up some Decker clients in the rural districts, and you to try to rent the Red Lion, you understand. We will not leave on the same train. It is not necessary that Pilot should know where I am going, or Mrs. Yost what you are going for. Sit down a moment and I will write you a note from Slugger about the man that wants to rent. Mrs. Yost may like to read it."

It would have been difficult for Mr. Slugger to have denied the authenticity of the letter now indited to Yost, and signed with his name, it so resembled the letter he had written in style, arrangement, and spelling. Pilot was advised that Rush would introduce Barney to their country clients, and that they would beat up any outlying Deckers they might find in the bush, and make as good a bag as possible. Hollanda was pleased at the prospect of renting their old home, and thus rescuing it, perhaps, from the domination of the spirit of Rinemond, or the "last guest," as she mournfully called him, and Pilot, who was tiring

of the companionship of both Rush and Barney, was glad to see them set out on a new campaign against the unhappy Deckers. They left the house at different hours, but went down on the same train and got off at Baker Station. Yost laid in a supply of groceries and provisions, and the grocer's wagon carried them out and deposited them on the front porch of the ancient inn. The keys were at Slugger's or near there, and it was concluded to walk over the hills by the short cut, and spend the night at the Coon. Rush now informed Yost of the disappearance of Dandy and his coat and lunch on the day of his former visit, and it was decided to hide the provisions in the barn. This done, they set out to cross the hills, Rush on the way informing his companions that he was known at the Coon as "Rankin," and wished to be so addressed while there, and of his proposition to Slugger to rent the Lion. Thus instructed, they in due time arrived at the Coon, and entered the bar-room as evening was coming on. They found Sam there.

"Why, my goodness gracious me, Mr. Yost," said he, shaking his hand, "how do you do? The sight of you's good fur sore eyes; and Mr. Rankin, too, as live as ever, and don't look pulled down a bit. The spirit don't seem to heve troubled him much, Mr. Slugger, for all you thought it would."

"Not so fur," answered Slugger, "*apparently*."

"Has any one seen the spirit since I left?" inquired Rush.

"Seen it?" answered Slugger, "I should think so. Ask Sam. He's been over a-mousin' about the Lion a-huntin' that bundle, and he cum back the other night with his teeth a-chatterin' in his head. He'll have no head to chatter 'em in afore long, if he keeps on. He's the darndest fool this side o' Baker Station."

"I'm done, Mr. Slugger," said Sam. "You won't see me there no more, not ef I know myself."

"Why, what scared you so Sam?" asked Yost.

"Well, gentle*men*," said Sam, addressing the newcomers, "I'll tell you how it was, and I wish I may never die ef I go that nigh the house agin. Well, I was over there the other evenin' a-lookin' round the Lion fur a coon track." Here he paused to wink at Rush, and Mirandy laughed. "An' the fust thing I knowed I was close to the garden fence, an' I see somethin' bright-like, a-shinin' inside. So I peeped through the palins and it turned out to be a bit of tin. Seeing this, sorter 'ticed me on, an' I walked down the fence a-peepin' through promiscuous, when all of a sudden I heerd a most a *awful* groan, an' lookin' up I found I was close to the smoke-house, an' then a all-fired rattlin' o' chains, an' I lit out. No man, I don't keer who he is, never made no better speed. I got to the top o' Possum Knob in

less than no time, an' somethin' a-breathin' hard behind me at every jump, and a-feelin' out for me. Mebbe the shivers didn't run down my back. I didn't draw breath till I got into Raccoon Holler; an' I wouldn't a-done it then, but I felt kinder safe a-gittin' near the Coon; an' I'd a dropped ef I hadn't. You ketch me goin' anigh that durned Red Lion agin. Not fur all the bundles—coons, I mean—inside all Jersey, an' outside too. No, sir, gentle*men*, not me."

"Stick to that, Sam," said Slugger, encouragingly, "and you may pull through all safe yet."

"I'm not much afeerd, Mr. Slugger," answered Sam. I kin outrun any spirit agoin' ef I git a fair start. What I'm afearin' of is bein' ketched onawares."

"Dandy can do that if you give him a start," said Mirandy. "That's no trick, Sam."

"No, Dandy can't, Miss Mirandy," answered Sam. "Dandy's a good hoss; I've nothin' to say agin him; but no hoss as ever lived could a got to the top o' Possum Knob as quick as I did. It ain't in 'em."

"This is rather scary talk," said Yost. "Slugger, let's have something to drink to wash it down with. Step up to the bar, gentlemen; come up, Sam."

"You're not afraid of Slugger's spirits, I suppose, Sam," said Rush smiling.

"No, I ain't, Mr. Rankin," answered Sam,

"nor of no other kind when there's company around. Them spirits is so durned cowardly they dassent attack a feller in a crowd. They lay fur him in the hills at night, when he's alone, an' can't see well, an' can't git away fast; that's their style."

"Do you fear them in the daytime, Sam," said Rush, "when you're alone?"

"No, I don't, Mr. Rankin," answered Sam—"that is, not much, not to speak of."

"It wasn't dark yet the other night, was it," inquired Rush, "when you started up Possum Hill?"

"It was plaguey nigh to it, Mr. Rankin; an' I mean I don't fear 'em much in the day, ef they keep their mouths shet, an' don't say nothin.' But when they come to groanin' an' shakin' of chains, that's business, an' I'll light out every time."

"You didn't see anything of that—er—coon I was talking to you about hunting up when I was down last, did you?"

"Not a hair of his hide, Mr. Rankin," Sam answered, "an' I turned over every log an' looked into every holler stump and tree in a circle all round the Lion. It's my belief the spirits found it, and hid it away in some other place, an' hangs about the Lion to fool us an' make us believe it's there yit, and to keep us away from the new place. That's my belief, Mr. Ran-

kin, an' I ought to know somethin' about the ways of them spirits by this time, ef I'm ever to larn."

"You know I don't believe in spirits, Sam," said Rush, "and I can't agree with you."

"Well, Mr. Rankin, let me tell you somethin' that happened sence you was here before. A lot of us fellers was a-coon-huntin' an' a-comin' home early in the mornin' an' a-crossin' the hill near the Lion, an' begun about the spirit. I was a-tellin' 'em what you said bout ther bein' no spirits, an' one feller spoke up and said he agreed with you, an' he didn't think ther wasn't none nether; an' Joe Snider said he'd give him a coon he'd cotched ef he'd go down the hill an' into the yard and knock at the back door. Joe didn't think he'd go, or he wouldn't a-offered his coon; but Hunter hadn't caught no coon that night, an' he wanted one, and so he went. Well, we all stood out on the edge o' the hill, where we could see the back door plain, an' watched him. When he got near the garden fence, he begun to walk slow an' kep' a-lookin' back, an' we waved our hats at him, an' he clumb the fence an' walked quick to the door an' give a rap. An' as quick as lightnin' he turned an' run like a rabbit with a dog after him, an' he tried to clear the fence at a jump, an' his feet ketched an' he fell over, an' got up with a sprain, an' cum limpin' up the hill like a dog on three legs.

An' when he got back to us, he set down on a stone to rest; an' his face was white, an' he looked faintlike, an' was the wo'st skeered feller I ever see, twice as bad skeered as ever I was. An' Snider offered him the coon, an' he said he didn't want no coon. An' ever sence then, when I see a feller a-tryin' to make out he don't believe in sperits, I sez to myself—'Si Hunter!'"

CHAPTER XI.

A MIDNIGHT APPARITION AT THE RED LION.

IN the morning Slugger brought in the keys of the Red Lion from the hole in the rocks, their place of deposit, and the party prepared to cross the hills. Rush, who disliked walking, hired Dandy, and offered Sam a fabulous sum, two dollars a day and his board, to come with them to the Lion and cook and serve them during their stay.

"Go," said Mirandy; "you'll never git another sich offer in your born days."

"Don't go, Sam," said her father; "what's money?"

"Money's money," said Sam, torn by the opposing emotions of avarice and fear, "an' it's the tallest offer I ever heerd tell of. It's enough to take a feller's breath away. An' I'll tell you what I'll do, Mr. Rankin—there's four of us an' only one spirit, Mr. Slugger—ef you let me ride Dandy down to the station, and bring up a jug o' whiskey, an' keep it on tap continual, I'll go. I'll be darned ef I don't. I'll be dad fetched ef I don't!"

Slugger said he always knew Sam was a fool, and with this parting salute they set out, Sam in the lead, swinging his arms defiantly. When they reached the Possum Knob, Sam halted, and as the party came up pointed out the course he had pursued in the memorable retreat from the smoke-house, across some very rough and impracticable ground until he fell into the path, when his pace became "tremenjous"; and also the brow of a hill opposite where the coon-hunters stood and witnessed the advance and assault of Hunter on the back door, and his disastrous retreat. Stimulated by these reminiscences, he again led on in the path, descending leisurely, where he had late fled up; the rim of his felt hat in front turned up and back communicated to his countenance a daredevil expression; altogether he presented the appearance of one to whom fear was a stranger. Their route, approaching the premises by the rear, brought them first to the barn; and here they halted and went in to see if their provisions were safe. They found the covering as they had left it, but on removing it discovered that the goods were gone. They passed out and followed the fence along which Sam had looked for the coon-tracks. He pointed out the bit of tin that had allured him into danger, and when they neared the smokehouse showed them his foot-prints in the sand, in which he was standing when the groaning and rattling of chains burst on

his terrified ear. When they turned the corner and approached the front of the house, Sam fixed his eyes on the dread water-trough, and stopped.

"Lord a massy," he exclaimed, "there's the groceries!" and sure enough, neatly piled up in the center of the trough, rose a pyramid of bundles, papers of tobacco and white clay pipes ornamenting the summit, in tasteful array. Rush offered the keys to Sam, and told him to unlock the front door and they would carry in the bundles; but Sam backed from him and declined to receive them.

"I would ruther Mr. Barney would do it," he said, "an' I couldn't even go in without I git a dram fust. I couldn't indeed, Mr. Rankin. Ef you don't object, I'll git on Dandy an' go for the liquor. I'll not be gone long, and it's got to be got anyway."

Rush handed him some money and told him to go.

"Mr. Rankin," he said, "there's enough money here to git two jugs and more; an' ef it's agreeable, I'll jist buy two instead of one. They'll balance one another on Dandy, an' look more sociable like. It's hard totin' one jug by itself."

"All right," answered Rush, and Sam mounted and rode off, pluming himself on his diplomacy. The doors were thrown open and the windows of the bar-room and kitchen. They ascended to the garret, and Barney set to work bringing down

chairs, bedding, and cooking utensils, and sweeping out the apartments intended for occupancy. The beds were made down in the long dining-room opening into the kitchen and hall, excepting one for Rush, who, in his character as the skeptic of the party, ordered Barney to build a fire in the Rinemond room on the front porch to drive out the damp, and to put it in good order. These arrangements made, Rush and Yost seated themselves on the back porch and entered into consultation.

"Now," said Rush, after a detailed account of the search he made on his first visit, "where do you think it's likely he hid the bundle?"

"First tell me," answered Yost, "how you explain the strange movements going on here."

"It's some fellows trying to scare us off, of course."

"What for?" inquired Yost.

"To buy the place cheap from you, or to get the bundle themselves. I have no doubt it is to get the bundle."

"I am not so sure about that," said Yost gloomily.

"Now, look here, Yost," said Rush. "Don't play into the enemy's hand by getting frightened. Listen to me. The unfinished letter of Rinemond shows clearly that a very valuable package was hidden by him that night. That letter was made public in Benvelt, and what more natural than that

some parties should set to work to find it? Here's how it is, in my opinion. A small syndicate of men, probably not more than three, well off and able to keep the thing up, are on the search through agents, and are driving everybody away by supernatural appearances. They know the prize is great, and that, sooner or later, they, if undisturbed, will find it. We have to deal with an organization that has money and intelligence behind it. While we are on the ground we stop their search; and if we stick to it long enough we will find the prize ourselves, if it is to be found, and divide it between us, and both be rich. Now keep your head level, and let's get back to business. Where do you think it most likely it is hidden?"

"You are sure it is not in the rooms above?" said Yost.

"It is not there," answered Rush. "I examined them thoroughly, nor in the rooms in the main hall. It is not worth while going over that ground again."

"Well then," said Yost, "it was him that I heard at the back door in the night, and he must have carried it out and hidden it in an out-house, or in the barn. Now, I judge others by myself, Rush, and if you or I opened this door in the night with a valuable bundle to hide, where would we hide it, being strangers, of course, to the premises? There's the wash-house and wood-

house on the right, and the smoke-house on the left, and the barn in front. I myself would go straight to the barn, for I know a barn has so many good hiding-places; but Rinemond, having been a seafaring boy and a city man, knew nothing about barns, and would most likely turn into the first out-house he came to, and that was the wash-house. He may have read about barns in stories, and of people hiding in them, or more likely read of it in the papers, and may have gone straight to the barn. The barn is the place above all to hide in; but I think Rinemond, or I in his place, would have turned into the wash-house. Suppose we begin there."

"Very well," said Rush, "let us go to work. Tell Barney to bring us a ladder, and we will not leave the wash-house until we find it, or know that it is not there. No going over the same ground twice."

Sam, at this moment, arrived with the jugs, which were put behind the bar, and one of them placed on tap. Dandy was turned into the paddock, and Sam pressed into the service, well fortified; and the search began. Every article left in it by Hollanda was carried out, the flooring raised, the rafters searched, and even the ground along the walls moved and the roof gone over, but all in vain. The bundle was not there. After a late dinner, the wood-house underwent a similar over-

hauling with a like result, and, evening coming on, they retired in-doors for the night.

Yost had brought down with him the "Mysteries of Udolpho" to while away the evenings, never having resumed it since it suggested to him the train of thought that ended in the death of Rinemond. After supper, and when the company had finished their smoke, and conversation over the events of the day had begun to lag, Yost took up the "Mysteries," and, at the request of Sam, seconded by Barney, read aloud, beginning where he had left off in the middle of a blood-curdling story. Sam, who took it all for gospel, soon fell into a state of terrified absorption; his jaw fell and his eyes, wide open, were fixed on the face of the reader. Suddenly an odor of burning sulphur began to pervade the apartment, and the doors and windows rattled with an explosion that shook the building. Sam sprang to his feet with a yell.

"Lord a massy, gentle*men*," he exclaimed, "it's got us!"

Rush drew his pistol and, seizing the candle, ran into the hall; the others, afraid to remain in the dark, followed. All was as silent as death, the hall dark and deserted. They went into the bar-room, out into the yard, and up to the porch, and looked into the fatal chamber where Rush proposed to pass the night; but, being unable to discover any sign of a living being, returned to the

kitchen. Rush put the candle and pistol on the table, and resumed his seat.

"Gentlemen," he said, "unless I miss my mark, there will be another coroner's jury in this house before long. I am a dead shot, and when I do shoot I shoot to kill."

"Lord, Mr. Rankin, how you talk!" said Sam, pale and awe-struck, in a subdued tone. "Spirits don't mind pistols no more than nothin'. You can't kill a spirit, for why?—it's dead a'ready. I wouldn't talk so, ef I was you. It'll on'y make 'em wo'se. I'd talk polite, cause they hear every word that's said. That would be my style."

Rush put his pistol in his pocket, lit a fresh candle, and went upstairs to bed. He threw a log on the fire, double-locked the door, fastened down the windows, and sat for an hour before retiring, looking in the fire, thinking and listening. As soon as he had left the kitchen, Yost locked the door, and the two doors leading from the hall into the dining-room, and fastened down the windows.

"Well, Sam," he said, as he resumed his seat, "do you think we are safe in here for the night?"

"I'm afeard not, Mr. Yost," he answered; "them sperits kin git in ef the doors *is* locked. I don't know rightly how, but they git in. Some think through the keyhole or at the cracks, and some think down the chimbley. I don't intend to sleep near no doors to-night, nor chimbleys

nuther. I never heerd of a sperit a comin' in at a winder when it was shet—not a tight winder—there ain't room enough."

"Barney," said Yost, "throw a log of wood on the fire, and let's all fill our pipes and take a smoke, and drown out the smell of sulphur. It's mighty disagreeable."

"It always goes agin *my* stomach," said Sam, "'specially at night. I never heerd of a sperit a drinkin' whiskey, Mr. Yost, nor they can't drink; but ef them two jugs is left in the bar to-night, they'll be gone in the mornin', that's as sure as we're a-settin' here now a-wantin' a drink."

"Well," said Yost, "go in and get them."

"I'll carry the candle, gentle*men*," Sam answered, "ef you two come along an' carry the jugs. I'm not afeard to go ef you ain't."

The jugs were brought out by the party in force, and tapped frequently during the remainder of the evening. As their spirits rose, the conversation flowed freely, and Sam in particular became pretty bold.

"I'm gettin' big wages," he said, "and I'll stick to Mr. Rankin as long as the whiskey lasts. I won't work for no man in a hanted house without whiskey, for no wages; it's onnateral to ask it."

"What do you think of this business, Barney?" inquired Yost.

"I was never out of the city before, Mr. Yost," he answered, "and the country's strange to me.

I'm scared, I'll acknowledge, and I don't know what to think."

"I suppose you never see a spirit in the city, did you?" inquired Sam.

"I never heard of one," answered Barney. "When I was a small boy, we used to play ghost sometimes."

"Cause there ain't no lonesome place there fur 'em to harbor in, that's why," said Sam. "I know their ways bettern most men. I knowed a ghost once when I was a boy that hanted a dark cave an' never come out, night or day; it jist laid low and moaned. I've heerd it many a time. It was close by the road, an' a peddler had been murdered an' dragged in, an' the coroner said the jury must set on him where he laid, an' he musn't be moved on no account. So the crowd went in with pine knots lit, an' they hedn't got more'n half done when they heerd a awful moan, back in the dark, an' they lit out, the coroner a-leadin', an' a-tumblin' over each other an' puttin' out the lights. So they made up the verdict outside, an' no one could be got to bring out the body, an' it's a-layin' in there in the dark this minute. And us boys used to sneak up as near as we darst, an' hang 'round 'til one of us heerd it, an' then we'd break down the hill like mad."

"What did you run for, if it never came out?" said Yost.

"Why, we couldn't tell but it might change its mind, you know, an' take after us, specially as we was on'y boys, an' catch the hindmost feller. I ginerally led off in them races, an' ther was good time made there too. I've heerd of hounds a-goin' into that cave on suspicion of game bein' in there, an' they always come out quickern they went in, an' galloped straight home with their tails atween their legs a howlin'. An' you couldn't git 'em to hunt no more that day. I knowed another spirit once that lived in a deep holler, somethin' like Raccoon Holler, an' he tuk after nigh onto every man as passed through late at night, but he never caught nobody. He had no speed to speak of—he couldn't run wuth a cent. Most people, 'specially women, carried a light with 'em to skeer him off. I heerd of another ghost, a water-spirit this one was—"

"No more stories to-night, Sam," interrupted Yost, "I am going to bed"; and the party, after a strong nightcap, retired to the dining-room and to rest.

In the middle of the night they were awakened by a noise as of a wagon driving up to the porch. They raised up in their pallets, and looked about them. The doors that Yost had locked were open, and the hall began to fill with phosphorescent light, and a figure glided by, with arms extended, and fingers spread feeling its way. Though but barely perceptible in the dim light, it

seemed to Yost to resemble the deceased guest, and the likeness caused him to shudder. In a little time, it passed the second door, still groping, until its right hand touched the stairway, which it began to ascend, stopped, and seemed to listen, then passed on out of view. The light in the hall suddenly disappeared, leaving it in darkness. Sam and Barney laid down in a state of collapse and covered their heads. Yost rose and groped his way to the kitchen and lit the candle. The others, emboldened by the light, left their pallets, and joined him in an assault on the jug. Yost sat down and filled his pipe. His companions did likewise, Barney first stirring the fire. They scarcely uttered a word, but smoked and listened, their faces turned to the open door. After the lapse of half an hour, the fire having gone down, a faint light pervaded the hall, and it reassumed its phosphorescent appearance. The men felt the phantom was descending the stairway. They saw it in a moment, moving toward the back door, groping with the right hand extended, the left hanging down grasping a bundle. Yost uttered an exclamation. The phantom stopped and seemed to listen; the light played brightly on the bundle, then faded, and in a few seconds the hall was dark.

After some minutes of profound silence, Yost helped himself to water from the bucket,the others following his example. Their throats were too

dry for utterance. Whiskey soon followed, and their pipes were lit, and a low and subdued conversation begun.

"I'd lock the doors agin, ef I was you, Mr. Yost," said Sam in a hoarse whisper. Barney seconded the motion; and Yost, who felt he was the only one capable of accomplishing the feat, got up and complied with the suggestion.

"Gentlemen," said Barney, whose real estate and legal training had given him a practical turn, "you all saw the bundle?"

"I didn't see nothin' else," replied Sam. "I see it now, a-glistenin' in the dark all alone with the hand and wrist, the fingers a-grippin' of it."

"Did it look like him, Mr. Yost?" inquired Barney.

"Yes," answered Yost, "it was him."

"If you had only a-follered him, Mr. Yost," said Sam, "'stead of speakin' and a-scarin' of him. He was a-goin' straight to the place where he hid it."

"I know he was," said Yost. "Why didn't you follow him, Sam?"

"What, *me?*" answered Sam. "How could I, when you skeered him back, Mr. Yost? Besides, it wasn't my place. I know my place as well as any man goin'. And that spirit's got a spite agin me. Ef he'd a turned round an' ketched me a follerin' of him an' a-spyin' on him, where'd I a

been? In kingdom come in less then no time; that's where I'd a been."

"What's he got a spite against you for?" inquired Barney.

"Because," answered Sam, "he wants all the hills around to hisself at night, an' I crossed him a huntin' coon. The fust time I ever see him, he come a-slippin' in atween me and my dogs, an' they hevn't been wuth a cuss since. Ghosts hate a coon hunter, an' dog him every chance they git. See how they skeered Si Hunter when he knocked at this very back hall door. Si hasn't been out after coon since, nor I doubt ef he ever will go out agin. Si 'll never be the same man he was; they nigh onto skeered the soul out of his body. Ef Si hed a-seen what we seen to-night, he'd a-gone up. His body would a been a lyin' on that floor now, dead as a mackerel. I'm glad Si wasn't here. He's got a poor mother to support, Si hez, an' I'm glad he wasn't here."

"You were badly frightened yourself, Sam," said Barney. "I thought one time I happened to look at you your lower jaw would have dropped off."

"*Me?* *My* lower jaw, Mr. Barney? Why, I wasn't skeered overly much—not oncommon. I was skeered a little, to be sure. So was you. So was Mr. Yost. My mouth always would open when I was took aback; but that's nothin' to speak of a man's jaw droppin' off. My hair riz a

little, but nothin' to what it did when I fust see this spirit. I'm gittin' used to 'em. It didn't rise nothin' to what Si Hunter's did. Si Hunter was the wust skeered man out of jail. It's well for Si he wasn't here to-night."

"What do you think he was going out for?" inquired Barney.

"Why," said Sam, "he was a-goin' out to make believe to hide a bundle. That was a sperit bundle he hed in his hand, 'twasn't a live bundle. Ef Mr. Yost hedn't a spoke, he'd a opened the door an' gone to the spot he hid the real bundle when he was alive, an' made believe he was a hidin' of it agin, an' then gone back to his room an' gone to bed. I wouldn't like to be a-sleepin' in his bed to-night along with Mr. Rankin. The sperit was a-dreamin' it all; he wasn't awake. When he's awake, he's everlastin'ly a-huntin' that bundle, and when he's asleep he's everlastin'ly a-makin' believe to hide it. He disremembers when he's awake what he's been a-doin' of in his sleep."

"I think," said Yost, "we ought to go up-stairs and look after Mr. Rankin. I feel uneasy about him."

"He's likely strangled in his bed a-ready," answered Sam, "and it's not wuth while disturbin' of him."

"Well," said Yost, "Barney and I will go up if you are afraid," and he got up from his chair and

reached for the candle. But Sam was too quick for him, and had it in his grasp in a second.

"I'll go, Mr. Yost," he said; "I'm not afeard; I'll carry the light."

"You will have to take the lead, if you carry the light," said Yost.

"I'll take the lead, Mr. Yost," he answered, "ef you foller close behind me. I'm not in the least afeard to take the lead."

They accordingly unlocked the kitchen door leading into the hall; and Sam, holding the candle out at arm's length in front of his face, where it prevented his seeing any thing, peered into the darkness with an anxious countenance. Followed closely by his companions, he advanced with halting steps to the foot of the stairway, and began the ascent. When half way up, the feeling that he was leading a forlorn hope overpowered him, and he turned to beat a retreat. But the way was blocked by his followers, and Yost told him sternly to go on. Thus cut off from a retrograde movement and impelled forward, he continued to advance slowly and with frequent halts. When he reached the open doorway leading to the front porch, he felt that the crisis was close at hand; and moving cautiously on tiptoe he stepped out, and turned up toward the awful chamber. In his agitation, he held the candlestick tipped over, and the grease dripped to the floor, marking his course, as he slowly approached what he believed

to be his doom. When he reached the window, the curtain of which was down, he noticed the door, a pace or two beyond, was standing open. In his surprise at this he halted, and, as he did so, the report of a pistol rang on the air, the flat-bottomed candlestick was hurled from his hand through the breach in the railing of the porch, and fell with a dull thud into the water-trough beneath, the light going out with a hiss; and the three men turned and fled.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SON OF OLD GILES WAKES UP.

THE day after Decker of Giles received the money for his share in the great inheritance, he rode to town and remitted Madison five thousand dollars. He began negotiations for the purchase of the alienated lands, and, piece by piece, bought them up; and he gave his farmer son money with which, on his own account, to purchase the Johnson farm, that came cranking in and marring the fair outline of the old estate. The ladies were made happy improving the house and grounds, and with promised yearly visits to the springs of Greenbriar in summer, and the town in winter. They fought hard for a town house, but compromised on the best rooms in the best hotel, the duration of their stay to be at their discretion. He sent his son to the mountains, to sound Lord Lovat on the acceptance of a sum of money. The old man told him the skins that he brought down, from time to time, to the Court House furnished him with all he needed; and he wouldn't soil his fingers with a dollar. That he hated the sight and very name of money.

The little gentleman who never ceased to brag of having been the first to see Madison ride up on the spotted horse, and who took immense credit to himself for that discovery, received his promised presents of a gun and pony; and the Deckers of Giles were restored to their ancient grandeur and pre-eminence in the county.

When Madison received the remittance from his father, he felt rich; and he resolved at once to propose for the hand of Della Decker. On the following morning he drove over, and, inviting the young lady to a walk by the little lake, he informed her of his good fortune, and laid it at her feet. The lady was willing; and, returning to the house, they separated; and Madison entered the library, and disclosed his suit to the old gentleman.

"You know, Madison," he said, "that the Bank of Amsterdam has taken an appeal. I am distressed at the delay this will cause in realizing on my heavy investment in the Decker estate. I will be cramped for means to carry on my ordinary expenses, and am beginning even to fear that the suit may be continued into the next generation. Mr. Pilot, I think, is becoming discouraged also. His letters are brief and unsatisfactory, and have become quite infrequent. In short, he doesn't answer my letters any longer. He owes me several now; and in my last, written ten days since, I urged my anxiety and an im-

mediate reply. All these things have created in me a self-distrust. I want some one to lean on. I want my daughter settled in life. I know no one but you to whom I would feel safe in resigning her. I shall ask her to fix an early day for the wedding; and I shall ask you to come up to-morrow and take charge of my papers and affairs. It will be an immense relief to me to shift the burden to your young shoulders."

"I will move up to-morrow," answered Madison. "I don't pretend to know much about business, but I am not afraid to take hold and do the best I can. I've attended trials at Giles Court House, and picked up a good deal; besides, I'm a good hunter and a patient one; and old Lord Lovat once told me that a good hunter would carry his patience and perseverance into whatever he wished to go at, and succeed in it; and the old man knows as much of life as any one."

"Where did you meet Lord Lovat?" inquired Mr. Decker.

"In the mountains of Giles," answered Madison. "He is a hunter, and a good one, none better, and lives alone in a cabin that he calls his castle, buried in the wilderness miles from any habitation. When he heard my father was expecting a fortune and was spending it in advance, he paid him a visit, and they went down to the river to fish, and the ladies told me that he came back to the house and mounted his pony, and rode off

without saying good-by, and from that day my father retrenched expenses to such an extent that the family became alarmed for his reason."

"What took place between him and your father on the river?" inquired Decker.

"My father never said, but he intimated to me when I was down that the old man had spent his best days in hunting a castle in the air, and from words dropped by him when we were out on the mountains together I suspect his father sank a fortune in the same pursuit. I believe they were after the Lovat estate in the Scotch Highlands.'

"I would like to see the old man very much," said Decker, after a pause. "Give me his address; I'll write to him."

The next day Madison settled with Mr. Bronson and moved to Rosedow. He soon mastered the Decker estate case, and became convinced Decker had been plundered. The consul at Amsterdam, departing from his custom of throwing fortune-hunting letters into the waste-basket unanswered, finding his name and seal were represented by Madison as having been used, replied to him stating that the name and seal had been forged and that the Decker claim was baseless, that no such advocate as Van Velsen lived in the Butter Market, or elsewhere in the city, and finally that he had sent a note to the bank and was informed that they knew of no such case, and had no deposit, great or small, and never had

had any belonging to American heirs. This letter opened the eyes of Decker, and he saw the trap into which he had fallen. He proposed the immediate arrest of Pilot and Rush.

"Let me first get your money back," suggested Madison, "and then, if you wish to jail them, we can do it as well as now."

"Do you think you can recover any of it, Madie?" asked Decker, brightening up. "But I fear they are too cunning," he added, his countenance again falling; "they are city rogues, and you a country boy. It is gone. They will keep it where no process of law can ever reach a dollar of it. No, it is their money now, not mine."

"I have measured myself with Pilot," answered Madison, "and can beat him at any game we play at. If I can get him to sit down to the table once, he's gone. The other man I don't know, but I will study him and beat him if I can. I was raised a hunter, Mr. Decker, and Lord Lovat said there was not a better in the mountains of old Giles; and I'll find that money, mark my words. I'll find it; at least, half of it, and bring it back to Rosedow where it belongs. I'll try for the whole with interest from the day they robbed you of it, and get it too, if I'm not much mistaken in my guess."

"Madie," said the old man, shaking him by the hand, "you put new life in me. What a thing it is to be young! What do you intend to do first?"

"Why, to tell the truth," answered Madison, "I will begin with deception. I will circumvent them as I would a brace of mountain wolves, until I get near enough to get a shot."

"Will you employ counsel, Madie?" inquired the old man.

"Far from it," he answered. "I'll make a still hunt all alone. I don't want a partner to step on a dry stick and stampede the game. Give me a still hunt, Mr. Decker, every time, when the game's shy. I'll bring them down, don't you fear—Pilot sure, and the other man too if he hasn't an eye in the back of his head. Don't write Pilot any more. Keep the engagement a secret, and give me plenty of time, and keep your courage up. Above all things, don't write to me to the care of Pilot, or to my boarding-house; if you write, address to the post; better far not to write at all. I'll drop you a line now and then maybe, and maybe not. If I get hot on the trail, it would distract me, and you may not hear from me until the hunt is over and the game brought down. I'll show those fellows that all the craft isn't confined to the cities."

Several days after this conversation, Madison walked into No. 10 Fish Street, and shook Mr. Pilot warmly by the hand. Pilot responded with a fair show of welcome, but a feeling of uneasiness. An emissary, he thought, from Rosedow.

"Take a chair, Mr. Decker," he said. "I am

glad to see you in the city. How are the folks at Rosedow?"

"Very well," answered Madison, "when I saw them last. And how have you been?"

"Quite well," said Pilot, "but not as busy as I would like to be. We are in the dull season now. When did you arrive in town?"

"I got in last night," answered Madison, "and am on the search for a boarding-house, and have dropped in on you for advice."

"I hardly know where to recommend," said Pilot. "How long are you going to stay?"

"All my life," answered Madison, "if I can strike root and get a start in business. My father doesn't relish one of his sons working as superintendent on a farm; it sounds too much like overseer in the old slave times. He doesn't think it's fit employment for a gentleman; so he sent me a good slice of the money he got for his inheritance, and ordered me down here to make my fortune. He thinks I'll make an Astor in time, and who knows? Maybe I will. At any rate, I'll try."

"What do you think of going into?" inquired Pilot.

"Real estate," answered Madison. "Buy cheap out lots and sell them at an advance as the street extends. My father says Astor made most of his money that way. Do you know any thing about the business?"

"Why, yes," answered Pilot, in a meditative way, "I ought to. I was brought up to it, and nearly all my law business now is connected with real estate."

"Good," said Madison, "I'm glad to hear it. I know nothing about it, as yet, myself, but I have an uncle who invested in Lynchburg town in that way, and he made money enough to buy a big plantation. That was before the war, when the railroad was coming out West. But he invested too heavy in darkies and the war smashed him. I've got considerable money, but I don't intend to invest it in the Fifth Avenue Hotel. I want to settle down in a respectable, cheap boarding-house, and look about me. No five-dollar-a-day hotel bills for me, if you please. In the best hotel at Giles Court House, they charge a dollar a day, and people grumble at that."

"How does Mr. Decker take the postponement of the Amsterdam settlement, to change the subject?" inquired Pilot.

"The last time I called there," said Madison, "something was said about an appeal, but the old gentleman said the decision was final, and the appeal was taken to keep the heirs out of their money awhile, until the bank could get ready. He said it was annoying, but in a few months the appeal would be set aside and the money paid."

"You haven't been over lately to Rosedow?" asked Pilot.

"Well, Mr. Pilot, now that it is all over, I don't mind saying to you that I have stopped calling there. My cousin and I couldn't hit it off exactly, and things came to a crisis a short time ago, and I retired. I suppose my nose turns up too much to suit; at any rate, it's all over. The track's clear up there now if anybody wants to go in and win. How are you off for society down here? I suppose it's not easy for a stranger to get in."

"Well, no," answered Pilot, "it's rather difficult; strangers make acquaintances, at first, at their boarding-houses, and often meet very nice people there. Speaking of boarding-houses, I'll take you down, if you like, to mine, and introduce you. It is highly respectable, and at the same time inexpensive. I would prefer hotel life, but my landlady is a distant connection, and I can't very well leave her. Put on your hat and come down."

That afternoon, Madison was installed as a lodger and boarder at 501 Fish Street, and kept the table in a roar of laughter, at tea, over a description of a colored camp-meeting, and the conversations that occurred at it. Hollanda enjoyed the fun, and laughed as she had not done since long before she left the Red Lion. The servant was captivated and the guests charmed with the acquisition. Madison had effected a lodgment in the enemy's outworks and quieted suspicion,

excited an interest in himself and his fortunes in the mind of Pilot, and dropped to sleep that first night of his campaign, felicitating himself that Old Giles was more than a match for the city.

"Mr. Pilot," said he, the next morning as they sat in the office smoking, "which is the safest bank to deposit in? My draft is on the 'Life and Trust'; do you know anything about it?"

"Not especially," answered Pilot, "but I suppose it's as safe as any. Of course, if a crash should come, none of them will be over-safe."

"My father," said Madison, "writes me to be careful what bank I deposit in. He says maybe it would be best to keep my money in government bonds, and sell them as I invest, and need the money. What do you think of that?"

"There's risk in that, too," answered Pilot, "for they may be stolen. If you keep them in a bank, the president or cashier may carry them off to Canada, and if you keep them in your trunk the servants may take them while you are out. Some men carry them sewed up in their underclothes, out of the reach of pickpockets. Bonds are thin and make a small bulk. They are high now—way above par, but as they will be high when you sell that will make no difference."

"That's what I'll do," said Madison. "I'll sew them up. I can't afford to take any risk. I'll buy bonds and sew them up. Father will be

pleased with that idea, I know. I suppose you just make a pocket in your flannel shirt with a piece of muslin?"

"You can buy flannels with pockets in them," said Pilot.

"I suppose they must feel uncomfortable," said Madison, "rubbing against a fellow's breast, especially at first."

"Oh, I don't know. Bonds are thin; you don't feel them."

"I'd be considered a rich man," said Madison, "down in Old Giles, with what I've got already. The girls would be setting their caps for me. They think my father has no end of money. But the old gentleman's getting a little sore over his sale. The money came in mighty handy to him, but he's beginning to think maybe he's paid too high for it. He says in his letter that he sometimes feels like the dog that snapped at the shadow and dropped the meat; and if he could pick up a small interest low he didn't know but he would hedge."

"I think an interest could be had," said Pilot. "The appeal, though as Mr. Decker says it can only result in a brief delay, has made some holders impatient and anxious to realize. How much is your father willing to invest?"

"I don't know. He said nothing more than what I have told you. I don't think the old gentleman would go in deep. I think five thou-

sand would be his limit; and maybe he wouldn't go even that high."

"Well," said Pilot, "you may tell him when you write, if you please, that I'll try and look up a small interest for him if he really wants to buy; but that it will be hard to touch anything under five thousand."

"I'll write after I get a little settled," said Madison, "and mention the matter. He'll want to know what your fee will be, though, before he does any thing."

"Tell him," said Pilot, "we get our fees out of the other party; it will not cost him a cent. It's the seller that pays the fee in real estate transactions, not the buyer."

"That will please the old gentleman mightily," said Madison, "for, if there is a thing he hates, it is paying a fee."

Madison passed the evening in the little parlor in conversation with Mrs. Yost. He had invited her in to discuss some arrangement concerning his room and held her attention by his pleasant manners and jokes until bedtime. She was so pleased and at ease with him that she was unusually communicative, and talked without reserve.

"Mr. Pilot tells me he is a relative of yours," said Madison. "Did you come from the same place?"

"I was raised," she answered, "five miles from his native town, Benvelt, on the road to Phila-

delphia. He is a distant relative. My father and my grandfather before him kept the Old Red Lion Tavern. It was a famous place in old times."

"Then you are from the country as well as myself. I wonder you came to the city. If I had a place in the country I would live there; I like it best."

"There was no longer any travel," she answered, "and besides it is said to be haunted; and I expect it is."

"I wish you would tell me all about it," said Madison. "I love ghost stories."

"Well," she answered, "a traveler put up one night, and fell from the porch in the dark and was killed. He was seen to walk afterwards by a dozen persons; and I certainly heard him myself several times, though I never saw him. It came out on the inquest that he had hidden a bundle of banknotes or bonds, but they were not found; and the man's relatives never turned up, though they published for them. My husband is down there now, trying to rent the place, and I suspect Mr. Rush and Barney, Mr. Pilot's clerk, are with him, hunting for the bundle, though Pilot doesn't know it if they are. I suspect them, from their all leaving on the same day, and a thing or two I noticed. As Rinemond, the man who fell from the porch, left no one to claim his money, they will keep it if they find it, but Alva,

my husband, shan't take a dollar of it. I'll see to that."

"But, if there are no heirs, why not?"

"Not a dollar," she repeated. "He was our last guest, and met his death through our neglect to have the railing of the porch mended, and Alva shan't have any of the money, if they find it. It would not be decent or right; and we have enough without it."

"I'll bet I can find the bundle," said Madison. "City men can never find anything; it takes a hunter. Why, my goodness! No man can hide a thing that I can't find. If I went down there, I'd find it in short order, especially if I knew the circumstances."

"What would you do with it, if you found it?"

"I would publish for heirs and do all I could to find them," he answered; "and if there were none I'd keep it. It is no use letting it rot in a hole. Besides, I think, Mrs. Yost, you are bound to find it if you can, and try to hunt up his heirs and restore it to them—less your expenses, of course."

"Well, Mr. Decker," she said, after a pause, "it never struck me that way before, but I believe you are right; and as you are a relative of mine, and I think you are an honest gentleman, I will tell you all about it, and you may go and look it up if you like. You think you can find it?"

"I know I can," said Madison, "if you show me

the room he occupied and tell me as near as you can what movement he made. I'll find it as sure as I'm sitting in this chair."

Hollanda was quite aroused by his enthusiasm and the grave responsibility that had just dawned upon her; and, after some thought, she said:

"Mr. Decker, after Alva has been back awhile, supposing they don't find it, I will go down to Baker Station in an early morning train and come back at night. I will walk straight out to the Red Lion when I leave the cars, and you can follow and keep me in sight. I think I see now why the spirit of Rinemond walks. If the bundle is found and taken away, his ghost will stop haunting the Old Red Lion."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PHANTOM HOLDS THE INN.

WHEN Rush rose from his seat before the fire and went to bed the room was warm; and, being fatigued by the unaccustomed labor of the day, he soon fell into a profound sleep. From this he was awakened some time in the night by a groan which seemed to his half-aroused senses to come from under the bed. He rose into a sitting posture and listened intently. The fire was out, and the door open, and the cold air pouring in from the porch. Hearing nothing further, he got out of bed, lit a candle, and, taking his cocked pistol in his right hand, raised the bedcovers with his left and looked under. He examined the closets and looked out on the porch, looked up and down, and over the railing on the area beneath. All was quiet, and the silence unbroken save by the gentle creaking of the old lion as he slowly swung to and fro on his solitary hinge. A temporary spout had been fitted to the pump by Yost, and Barney instructed to water Dandy; but, not knowing his capacity for holding liquids, he had

pumped until the old trough had overflowed. The light of the candle glanced from its surface and set Rush to thinking of the fall of Rinemond, and of the chance of his having so fallen as to light in the trough lengthwise, and become submerged; and to speculating whether he was killed by the fall, or stunned and drowned. The night was somber, the sky overcast, and the near horizon of cypress and pine shutting in the view rendered the sight of it oppressive. He turned to re-enter his room, when he perceived a light issuing from the hall door. He placed his candle on the floor, and cautiously approached, and looked in. He saw a figure, moving slowly at the further end, turn into a side passage. He followed with as little noise as possible, now catching a glimpse of it, as it disappeared in one of the involved and winding narrow halls, and now seeing it glimmer for a moment in advance. At length, when he thought he had lost the track and was groping in the dark, he came to a gallery, at the further end of which he saw it pausing at the bottom of a staircase, with one foot on the first step, half turned about and looking toward him. It carried no light, but seemed self-illuminating, surrounded by an effusion of phosphorescence. Though the outline was vague, Rush thought he caught a resemblance to Rinemond, and, as the figure turned and glided up the narrow stairway, he slipped off his shoes and ran

rapidly down the gallery and up the stairs in pursuit. When he reached the landing he was just in time to see it enter a door that closed behind it, facing him, at the end of a hall. On reaching the room he lifted the latch and pushed, but the door stood firm. Its upper half was glazed to admit light and a faded curtain hung over it. A faint light from within shone through a hole in this covering; and, shading his face with his hands, he stooped and looked through. The interior, dimly illuminated, was unlike any room he had ever seen. The walls, rough and uneven, seemed to be of stone, covered with a white-wash, mildewed and stained; the floor was in a litter of dirt and trash; and a pallet of ragged bedclothing occupied one corner. On a piece of brown canvas on the floor lay a slice of moldy cheese and a loaf of black bread. A little sallow-faced man squatted near, with an open pocket-knife in his hand, and opposite knelt a hungry-looking boy in a state of expectancy. Both were dressed in rags, and their faces partly turned to Rush, who muttered aloud:

"The Rinemonds, father and son."

"At once the light faded, and in a moment the room was dark. Rush, deeply moved, began his retreat. He felt his way along, bewildered in the tortuous passages, and was long finding his way to his room. He was chilled, and, after locking the door, covered himself up in bed, and

thought over his singular adventure. He was dazed; but, after recalling a conversation with Yost that morning on Rinemond and his father's early poverty, which might have been overheard, and given rise to the scene to frighten him off, he became somewhat reassured. He had nearly fallen asleep when the door swung open. He rose and grasped his pistol and listened. In a few moments he heard steps cautiously approaching, and saw the light on the porch floor, and then on the curtain of his window the shadow of a man with a candle, and, raising his pistol, he fired, and sprang from the bed. When he reached the porch, he heard the clatter of feet in the hall and down the stairway; and stepping to the railing watched to get a shot in case they emerged from the front door. Quiet settling down on the inn, and nothing appearing to draw his fire, he returned to his room, closed the door without troubling himself to lock it, and again went to bed. His skepticism had been shaken by the vision in the strange room, but was restored by the recalled conversation and his last encounter with persons that he knew were living men. Worn out with fatigue, he soon fell asleep.

In the precipitate flight of the three men from the upper porch, Sam started at a disadvantage; but he kept close at the heels of his companions until they neared the bottom of the stairs, when he flung himself over the railing and took the

lead, and was the first to enter the kitchen, thus maintaining the reputation he had earned in his earlier flights. They locked the door and gathered about the fire to recover breath. Yost presently lit a fresh candle and, selecting a stick from the pile of firewood, laid it on the table to be used as a bludgeon in case of need. Sam did likewise, but Barney, considering himself, in his character of city man, as excused from military duty, failed to follow their example, and took a chair in a helpless and bewildered state of mind. The jug was soon called on to restore lost courage and the ever-soothing pipe ; and a low conversation set in once more.

" My hand's that numb, gentle*men*," said Sam, as he poured out a second drink and held up the tin of whiskey, " that you may see it a-trimblin' a-holdin' this cup up. That sperit jarred me so when he knocked the candlestick out of my hand that I don't believe I'll ever git over it. This night's used me up, that's what this night's done. I'm a used-up man." He drank the whiskey, and in a few moments took up the jug and poured out again. " I didn't take a big enough swig that pour, gentle*men*," he added in an apologetic tone, " and I'll jest take another to try and stop the trimbles."

The others, stimulated by his example, again sought consolation ; and Barney, as he resumed his seat, said ;

"It seemed to me it was a pistol ball that knocked the candlestick out of your hand, Sam; I didn't see any sperit about."

"It was a silver bullet, then," said Sam, "an' didn't come out of no real gun. Any one could tell that by the sound it made a-strikin' of the candlestick."

"It was fired from the room," said Yost, "and I think Rush fired it."

"Who's Rush?" inquired Sam. "It's Mr. Rankin, you mean? Why, Mr. Yost, you must be badly skeered to misname a man that a-way. Mr. Rankin wouldn't a fired at me when he's hired me at two dollars a day and board. What fur? No—Mr. Rankin's no more. I consider the sperit found him a-occupyin' of his bed, an' choked him to death, an' then shot at me. He hates me wus than pizen, that sperit does; an' he'll git me yit; that's my guess."

"The candlestick seemed to fall into the water trough," said Barney; "it sounded like it."

"Yes," said Yost gloomily, "it did."

"An' didn't you hear the candle a-hissin' when it struck the water?" said Sam. "It hissed vicious, like a mad snake. It minded me of a rattler that bit Si Hunter's dog. We was a walkin' along a path, Si behind, an' his durned dog a-sneakin' behind him unbeknownst to us. The other dogs was a-nosin' along in front, an' this cuss*ed* animal had slunk round behind to

'scape work, an' follered so close that he nearly teched Si's legs, to keep from bein' seen. Well, we heerd a owdacious rattle, an' both jumped; but the dog was too mean to jump, an' the rattler struck him on the nose. Ef he'd a hed his nose in front a-snuffin' for a coon track, it wouldn't a ben bit. Ef Dandy was my hoss, he shouldn't drink no water out of that trough—not after to-night."

"What's the matter with the water?" said Yost.

"Nothin's the matter with the water, Mr, Yost," said Sam, "but the trough's pizen. No hoss of mine, ef I hed a hoss, should tech water out o' it. It drown*ded* a man, an' it's put out a light with a hiss, an' it's pizen. Mr. Rankin will hev a big bill to pay Miss Mirandy (that is pervidin he ain't dead, which he is, in my opinion) ef he don't look out where Dandy drinks. I wouldn't let Dandy come nigh that trough. I'd water him out of a bucket, an' I wouldn't let the bucket tech the trough, nuther."

"Sam was the worst scared of any coming down," said Barney. "So scared he had to jump over the stair rail."

"I was in the most dangersome place," said Sam, "an' I jumped cause I felt somethin' a breathin' on the back of my neck an' a feelin' fur my collar; that's why I jumped. I'm not a-goin' to stay back an' be ketched, fur nobody. It's every

man for hisself when a sperit's after him, specially with a pistol, an' a-grabbin' fur him. Mr. Barney's a leetle put out cause he was beat into the kitchen, that's what's the matter with Mr. Barney."

"Well," said Yost, "we are all safe now, and I think I'll take a drink, and try to get a little sleep. If it comes again, let it come. "I'll not get up again till morning.

"I'll take a drink too, Mr. Yost," said Sam, "an' I'll go to bed an' kiver my head up; an' no ghost hed better feel around tryin' to unkiver me, nuther. I've stood about as much as I'm goin' to stand for one night. I'll take this club into bed with me too, so I give notice." With this they each took a strong nightcap and retired. No ghost of any description ventured to uncover Sam's head in the night, or further disturbed his slumber or that of either of the other occupants of the haunted inn. Rush came down without the mark of cord or fingers about his throat, and all seemed to have passed through the terrors of the midnight without apparent injury; but Dandy was gone with saddle and bridle. After mutual explanations, in which Rush suppressed all that had occurred above, save the shooting, which he said was a mistake, they went in a body to the water-trough, and fished out the candlestick, battered by the pistol ball. No hunt was made for Dandy, Rush saying he would prosecute the scamps for horse-stealing, if they didn't bring him

back, but after breakfast they searched the inn from garret to cellar, under his direction, but found no trace of anybody. Nor was Rush able to find the room with the glazed door, or his shoes, and was reduced to an old pair found in the garret. The cellar was padlocked, and showed no sign of having been disturbed since Yost had moved from the inn. It was dark, but every apartment, and there were several, was imperfectly examined by candle-light, except the old wine-cave, which had not been used for years, and whose ponderous lock resisted all efforts to open it.

They now resumed their hunt for the bundle, and, approaching the smoke-house, Sam pushed in the door; but meeting with resistance, after it had opened a little way he introduced his head, and quickly drew it out again, exclaiming:

"Dandy, by gum! with his tail shaved."

It was too true. He was presently led out, saddled and bridled, without a vestige of hair on his caudal extremity, looking dejected and careworn.

"The durned meanery of that sperit," said Sam defiantly, "beats all creation. To go and shave off Dandy's tail! What'll Miss Mirandy say?"

"I'll put a piece of lead in one of those fellows," said Rush, "before I get through with them; they are carrying the farce a little too far."

"Miss Mirandy'll charge purty high for this, Mr. Rankin," said Sam. "She's high spirited, is Miss Mirandy, an' she hates such nonsense,

She'll say Dandy is no use to her now till the hair grows out; an' ef you git off with four dollars, you'll be doin' well."

"You mind your own business, Sam," said Rush. "I'll settle with Mirandy. Barney, water the brute, and turn him out to grass."

"In a bucket," said Sam, in a stage whisper. "Mind what I said last night about the trough."

"Come," said Rush, impatiently, "let's get to work."

The smoke-house was now thoroughly examined, and they passed to the barn. When the afternoon was well advanced, they came out, and gave it up; the bundle was not anywhere in that hiding-place of hiding-places; and Rush began to despond. They found some curious old coin, hidden in past generations in several secret nooks by deceased hostlers and stable-boys long since matured and passed away, and an ancient silver watch, very large and very much the worse for its long confinement, and other odd bits, but nothing of value.

Yost said, if the bundle was not buried in the yard between the back porch and the barn (and he didn't believe it was) then, in his opinion, Rinemond had written the fragment to "Dick" to deceive, and had disposed of the "bundle" before arriving at the Red Lion. This presentation of the case shocked Rush; and he took Yost aside to consult.

"What on earth put that in your head?" said he.

"I felt all along," answered Yost, "that we would find it in the barn. When our search was nearly through there, you may remember, I sat down to rest awhile. I had despaired then, and thought the whole case over. I said to myself, if the bundle had been hidden on this place we would have found it already; and, assuming that no one else has found it, it was not hidden here, but disposed of in some way (given to some one to keep, or hidden) by Rinemond before he arrived that night at the Lion. Then I said, he must have lied in his letter to Dick. Yes, he lied. What for? To do Dick out of his share of the plunder. He tells him of the lonely inn, the ill-looking landlord alone in the house, his fears of a visit, his intention to hide. This was to prepare Dick for a second letter, in which he would have told of having been unconsciously watched by some one—the ill-featured landlord, most probably—and on going to his hiding-place found the bundle gone. This is my belief; he never brought the bundle to the Red Lion."

Rush sat confounded. He wondered that this view of the case had never occurred to him. He felt that he in Rinemond's place would probably have acted in that precise manner. He felt humiliated and beaten. A spirit of vengeance awoke in him against the midnight intruders

who were playing tricks on him. If he could cripple one of them, he could go away with some degree of satisfaction.

"Yost," he said, after a time, "you may be right. It is not improbable, though by no means certain. We have time to examine the yard before dark. To-morrow will be Sunday, and the men will want rest, and we can think it over."

The yard was gone over, and in many places the soil slightly moved where it presented indications of having been disturbed. Nothing was found, and the party retired to the house for supper and the night. Rush sat in the kitchen smoking and talking until bedtime. There was a feeling that the worst was over, and hopes were entertained that they might pass the night undisturbed. The party became convivial, and remarks were made on the conduct of the spirit, especially in his relation to the denuded Dandy, that were defiant and far from complimentary.

"I think," said Sam, "that Dandy's tail ought to be rubbed with coon grease twist a day till the hairs gits a good start. The *idea*, fur to go an' treat a inercent pony that away! I don't keer who hears me," he added, with rising indignation; "it's low down fur to cut off a pony's tail in summer time."

"I'm going over to the Coon in the morning," said Yost, "and I'll tell Miss Mirandy about it. It will put her in a fine temper."

"I'd like to go too," said Sam. "It's Sunday, an' a chicken-fight; an' we can't work on Sunday, Mr. Rankin; it ain't lawful, nor religious nuther. And Mr. Barney, it's likely, never see a real chicken-fight in his life, bein' raised in a city. He'd like it too."

"You may all go, if you like," said Rush. "I'll stay and keep house; but be back early Monday morning. It may be our last day here, though we may stay the week out—I can't say yet"; and with this he took up his candle and went up-stairs to bed. After some conversation on the glory and delight of chicken-fighting, the men below retired also; and the haunted house settled down in darkness and quiet. A storm was gathering, and the dining-room was close, and Yost threw up a window opening on the front porch, to admit the air.

Some time after midnight, a crash of thunder that shook the old inn to its foundations awoke the three men, and they sat up in their beds. The doors leading into the hall were open, and they perceived it lighting up with phosphorescence. The back hall door opened, and the phantom glided in, groping. When the outspread fingers touched the rail, they closed on it, and the phantom glided up, stopping, as on the former occasion, to listen, and renewed its upward movement with reluctance, as though impelled by a power it was unable to resist. A second

clap of thunder, more violent than the first, shook the house, and the phantom passed out of view.

This thunder awoke Rush. It was intensely dark, but he felt the air coming in, and arose and walked to the door. The rain was falling heavily. He looked out and saw the phantom approaching, with outstretched arms, veering toward the break in the railing. It seemed to slip on the wet edge of the porch as it reached the gap, partly recovered, and fell backward, throwing out its arms. Then a vivid flash of lightning blinded Rush, and in a moment he heard a plunge in the water below.

The men in the lower room heard through the open window the plunge, and got up. Yost started for the bar-room, but, recollecting himself, turned to the kitchen and lit a candle. As he crossed the hall, he met Rush coming down. They entered the bar, and Yost took down the lantern from the same peg he had taken it on the former stormy night when he visited the water-trough in haste. They all went out, and, by the light of the lantern, saw the trough half empty, the surface still agitated, and rills of water running away in all directions.

They silently returned to the kitchen, built up a fire, refreshed themselves from the jug, lit their pipes, and quietly discussed the events of the night. Rush make light of the occurrence. He said the scamps played their parts so skillfully,

they must have had an adept from the city to direct them. It was really first-class work.

"I will not sleep another night in the Red Lion," replied Yost, gloomily.

"I've been a-thinkin'?" said Sam, "what Mr. Slugger said to me when Miss Mirandy told me to come here. "Sam,' said he to me, 'don't go. What's money?"

"I will not ask any of you to spend the night here again," said Rush. "I can keep house alone, very well."

"Not that I'm afeard to stay, Mr. Rankin," said Sam, but I don't like a-losin' of my natural rest, and not every feller kin stand what I kin, nuther. Why, I've hunted coon night runnin' fur nigh onto a week. But it's different huntin' and a-bein' hunted, or hanted, one might say, which is wuss. No gentle*men*," he added, "if Mr. Rankin will give me one dollar a day and board and whiskey, I'll give up the other dollar, and sleep at the Coon."

CHAPTER XIV.

MERRIMENT AT THE COON AND DESPAIR AT THE LION.

AFTER an early breakfast on the following morning, the three men, leaving Rush to dispute possession of the haunted tavern with the phantom, took the pathway over the hills to the Coon. The day was bright, and the assembly large, and the interest divided between the chicken-fight and the heroes fresh from the field of ghostly combat. All day long groups were gathered about Yost and Sam, asking all manner of questions and probing for details. Sam had never known a day of such high honor. He was, by general consent, placed at the head of the class as a discerner of spirits, and the special malevolence displayed toward him by the phantom of the Red Lion won him pronounced respect. It was the general opinion that "no spirit would ever get away with Sam," but he modestly dissented from this, and expressed the fear that some dark night in the hills they'd take him unawares, and "git him yit." He was an object of mysterious interest, and enjoyed his dangerous elevation as a mark

for ghostly malice to the top of his bent. Slugger was immersed in mundane matters, but he joined in the discussions that took place before the bar, and was firm in the belief that Sam's days were numbered. He might be given twelve months (they often gave twelve months, seldom more, to one especially obnoxious), but Sam was a doomed man. When he allowed money to outweigh the advice of friends he, in effect, sold himself and gave the spirits power over him; and when they wanted him, they would call for him and get him too.

Mirandy, though she had very little time to devote to the subject on that busy day, expressed high displeasure at the slight put upon Dandy.

"Whoever did it," she said, "spirit or no spirit, had better keep out of my way. I'll make 'em wish they had never seen Dandy, much less chopped off his tail."

"They didn't chop it off, Miss Mirandy," interposed Sam; "they on'y shaved it off."

"Well," resumed she, "it's the same thing; chopped or shaved, his tail 's gone."

"Mr. Rankin said, Miss Mirandy, when they led Dandy out of the smoke-house, that he'd settle with you fur the tail."

"I'll settle with him, you'd better say," she replied. "Wait till I catch him over here."

"Why, he couldn't help it," said Sam. "The sperit done it in the night when we was asleep."

"Don't talk to me of spirits," she answered. "I'll make Mr. Rankin pay well for that piece of work. I'll make him buy the pony, that's what I'll do. I don't want a horse without a tail, any more than without a head. He can't keep the flies off and they'll bite him to death. I won't take Dandy back nohow. What do you think Dandy's worth, Sam, at the least calculation?"

"Well," answered he, "of course, you mean, with his tail growed out."

"Of course," she answered with indignation. "I'm not going to let Rankin dock me on account of his tail. A pretty thing indeed."

"Well," said Sam, soothingly, "Dandy's well wo'th, tail an' all, twenty dollars. He wouldn't bring it though, mind you, where he's knowed, by reason of his dealin's with the sperits."

"If you dar insinuate that Dandy's got a spell on him agin, Sam, I'll hit you with this rollin' pin."

"Well, well," answered Sam, in some alarm, "I'll swear Dandy ain't hurt a bit by what he's gone through, an' Mr. Rankin must pay for the tail an' all, of course; it would be ridiclous to think otherwise. He'll do what's right, Miss Mirandy, don't fear him."

"I don't fear no man," answered she, "and I'll have my rights. You tell Mr. Rankin to send me over twenty dollars and keep Dandy."

"I really think," said Sam, in a deprecatory

tone, "you might let Mr. Rankin off with less."

"I won't," she answered; "you said he was worth twenty, and I'll have twenty, not a cent less."

"But you see, Miss Mirandy," he said in his softest accents, "there's two prices to a hoss, a askin' price an' a takin' price; an' twenty dollars is Dandy's askin' price."

"And what's his takin' price?" she asked.

"Why, Miss Mirandy," answered Sam slowly, "I don't want to give you no offense, an' Mr. Rankin will pay whatsomever you ask, an' you hedn't oughter put it higher'n the hoss is really wuth. You don't want to take no onjust money out of Mr. Rankin, I know you don't. The takin' price fur Dandy, if you'll excuse me, Miss Mirandy, is fifteen; honest now, it is."

"Well," she answered, after a minute's pause, "tell him to send over fifteen dollars, all in silver, and to take good care of Dandy and treat him well"; and with this, she went off briskly to her work.

This transaction elevated Sam so highly in his own esteem that he went into the yard and bet half a dollar on a chicken then engaged in deadly combat, the largest single bet he had ever made —and lost. As the sun got low, the guests at the Coon began to take their departure; the aristocrats on Sandhill ponies and the plebeians

on foot. The excitement caused by the accounts fresh from the Red Lion of the startling "goings on there" not only stimulated the sale of liquor at the bar throughout the day, but infused a reckless spirit into the company, and caused the betting on the chicken-fights to reach a fearful height. Quarters were put up by lads who had never ventured beyond ten cents before, and men who had long deliberated on a quarter stake now freely laid down their halves with imprecations. Hunters, flushed with the proceeds of a late sale of coon skins, were seen to risk a dollar on a single chicken, and swore loudly and became turbulent when they lost. Winners strutted about with their hats cocked up, flown with insolence; and many quarrels occurred and several fights between them and their sore and bankrupt opponents. Yost himself supposed, since he had become a dweller in cities, to be a reformed chicken-fighter, found it necessary to knock down an impecunious coon-hunter whom he had reduced to poverty, and who bewailed his condition too loudly. Fortune had favored him that Sunday, and Barney, who backed his opinion, won largely also. Sam, in the pride flowing from his new-born importance, had bet recklessly and without sufficient previous examination of the chickens, and was "stripped to the skin," as he mournfully expresed it, early in the day, but took his losses like a philosopher.

"I kin stand it, boys," he said; "I'm a-gittin' two dollars a day an' board an' whiskey, an' ef I can't stand a loss who kin, I should like to know?"

"I suppose," said Slugger from behind the bar, "Mr. Rankin paid you up, Sam, to date?"

"Yes, he did, Mr. Slugger; honorable, down to date, down to this mornin'."

"He'll never pay you no more then," said Slugger ominously.

"Why won't Mr. Rankin pay me no more, Mr. Slugger?" inquired Sam.

"'Cause dead men, or carried-off men, never pay nobody. You expect to find Mr. Rankin at the Lion to-morrow, but you won't; not much you won't; or if you do," he added, hedging, "you'll find him past hirin' of anybody at two dollars a day and board and whiskey. So you'd better a kep your money, instid of a-squanderin' it on bad bets, to buy your drinks with."

"I've plenty of friens around to treat me, Mr. Slugger," answered Sam. "I've had two invites to every one drink I've had to-day; an' I don't look fur 'em to give out afore sundown. My friens is as thick as grasshoppers."

"And as green," said Slugger, "but not as green as you are, to go and sling your dear-earned money about in that way. I thought you hed more sense."

"What's all this talk about?" said Yost, walking

up to the bar. "Come, Sam, take a drink; Barney, walk up."

"You see, Mr. Slugger," said Sam triumphantly. "Friens takes the place of money; money's not so lastin' as friens, not by no means. Give me friens any day, and let the money go."

After nightfall, when the guests had departed, and the surviving chickens had been duly washed and doctored and put in their separate coops, the family assembled in the bar-room and discussed the events of the day. Miss Mirandy honored them with her presence and lent a charm to the conversation.

"You tell Mr. Rankin," she said to Sam, "to send my money over here by noon, or I'll be after him as soon as dinner's over, and the things red up. It's like as not if I have to go over, I'll take Dandy away from him too—money and pony both. I'm not a-going to be imposed on, and so you tell Mr. Rankin to look out."

"I'll tell him, Miss Mirandy," said Sam. "He'll look out not to fall out with you. He's too smart for that, Mr. Rankin is."

"You'll not find him very smart when you go over in the mornin'," said Slugger; "and Mirandy'll whistle fur her money and Dandy too. A fool and her pony's soon parted."

"You let Mirandy alone, pap," she answered; "she's capable of takin' care of herself purty well,

specially as she ain't so skeery as some folks it's needless to mention."

"Young gals ain't in their places in bar-rooms," answered Slugger, stung by this retort, "a-interruptin' men by their talk. They hed better be a mendin' stockin's in their kitchen, that's what they'd better be a-doin' of, by a long sight."

"Mr. Yost," said Mirandy, paying no regard to her father's last remark, "what do you think of them doin's over to your house? Do you think them spirits is real or got up?"

"The spirits in the Lion are real, Miss Mirandy," answered Yost. "At least one is, for I recognized him and I know he's dead."

"That was him," said Slugger.

"Yes," answered Yost, "that was him."

"Why didn't you speak to it," inquired Mirandy, "and ask it what it was a-cuttin' up in that way fur, and what it wanted of you?"

"Mr. Yost did say somethin'," interposed Sam, "and the sperit melted away direct, a-frownin' on him."

"No, it didn't frown on him," said Yost, "but it disappeared."

"It seemed to me to frown, anyway," said Sam. "I was somewhat skeered, an' it's more'n likely it's me it frowned at. I'm no favo*rite* of hisn, an I 'spect it was me it was a-aimin' at. I'm not afeard of his black looks, nohow. Black looks don't kill nobody."

"You'll not git shet of it at the Lion, Yost," said Slugger solemnly, "until it's spoke to and it tells what it wants. Maybe it's got that there bundle on its mind, and wants to tell where it's hid, and can't till you speak first and ask. It's dangerous a-holdin' converse with 'em, but I don't see no other way. If it ever comes to the Coon and hangs about like it does at the Lion, it'll get spoke to. I'm not a-goin' to be driv out of my house by no spirit, if speakin' to it'll get me shet of it."

"I think I hear you addressing a spirit," laughed Mirandy. "If it comes here and's got out, it'll be me much more likely as sends it a-flyin'. I'll run at it with a broom, that's what I'll do, and hammer it fur cuttin' off Dandy's tail. I don't fear no spirit that's mean enough to cut a pony's tail off. Let it come here once and you'll see who's afeard and who isn't."

"It'll cast a spell on you, Miss Mirandy," said Sam, "if you try to misuse it. It'll get insulted sure if you run at it with a broom. Even a man don't like to be run at with a broom, much less a spirit."

"Well, let it keep away from me then," she answered wrathfully. "I'll stand no nonsense, and they might as well know it, first as last."

"If it comes to hant the Coon," said Slugger, "Mirandy'll not live a month; no, nor the half of it. I misdoubt ef she gets through the fust half

alive. I'm sorry fur Mirandy. She's the only gal I've got, but I don't see no hope fur her, ef the spirit comes. None whatever."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Mirandy. "You needn't try to skeer me, pap."

"I ain't a-tryin' to skeer nobody," answered her father; "I'm only givin' a warnin'. Them that can take it, let 'em, and them that can't, let 'em suffer. I've done my duty."

At this moment a boy came in who had been sent to the station for supplies, and called at the Lion to leave a bottle of milk for Rush. He reported the doors open and no sign of Mr. Rankin. He had called aloud, and, getting no answer, had left the bottle on the kitchen table and hurried way. He gave it as his decided opinion that the gentleman was "done fur."

"What do you think of that, Mirandy?" said her father. "That comes of a defyin' of the spirits. You had better look out or it'll be your turn next."

"Did you see Dandy?" she inquired of the boy.

"Yes," he answered, "I see him a-trottin' round the paddock with his stump a-stickin' out."

"How did the poor feller look?"

"Awful," answered the boy.

"Poor Dandy!" she said. "I'll make somebody pay for this," casting a threatening glance at Sam that he quailed under, "if Mr. Rankin's gone. I'll have satisfaction out of somebody."

"Was there any fire in the kitchen?" asked Yost.

"None," answered the boy; "it was dead out. He's not there, gentlemen, fur I hollered loud enough to wake the dead. When you all went away and left him alone, the spirits had him to theirselves, and they must a flowed off with him. That's what I think become of him."

"Come up and take a little weak whiskey and water, boy," said Slugger. "Come up all, gentlemen, and take a drink. I'll stand treat."

"Maybe he's found the bundle, and eloped to keep from dividing," suggested Barney, who recalled the Rosedow business and his friends Thaddeus and Outcalt.

"Maybe he was frightened off and run away," suggested Mirandy.

"No, Miss Mirandy," said Sam, "Mr. Rankin isn't of the runnin' kind. He'd stay an' fight till they killed him or carried him off. Though now I come to think of it, he did look skeered when we went out to the trough in the rain. I hed a mind fur to say 'Si Hunter' in a joke like, but I didn't want to hurt his feelin's. Si's the wo'st used-up man in these hills; why, he hasn't been out at night after nothin' sence he knocked at the back door of the Lion to win Joe's coon, an' after he won it he wouldn't tech it. He's got a spell put on him, that's what's the matter of Si Hunter,"

"He's hanted," said Slugger, "fur goin' down and defyin' of the spirits on a bet. You can't insult a spirit that a-way; it won't stand it. And fur a dead coon at that! Why, he couldn't a done a wus thing, or a more disagreeabler thing. It was more insultin', if anythin', than a-hitten' of 'em with a broom."

At this cut Mirandy smiled and said:

"If the spell keeps him at home a choppin' wood fur his old mother instead of gallivantin' at night after coon and a-sleepin' all next day, it'll be a blessin' to her anyway, and none the wus fur him. The usefullest knock Si ever give was on the back door of the Lion that early mornin', and if Sam had the sense to be drove to work by 'em 'twould be a blessin' fur him."

"Not fur me, Miss Mirandy," said Sam; "I wouldn't keer to live ef I couldn't hunt coon no more, I wouldn't indeed. Ef a feller's druv from the hills at night fur good by them durned spirits, life's not worth livin'. A feller might as well lay down and kick the bucket at once an' be done with it. Them's my senti*ments*, Miss Mirandy, and gentle*men*."

"When you lock up the Lion to-morrow mornin', Mr. Yost," said Slugger, as the party surrounded the bar for their nightcap, "I wish you wouldn't bring the keys to the Coon."

"Where can I leave them?" asked Yost.

"Leave 'em at the groc'ry at the station," said

Sam; "they're not afeard of 'em. When I went down on Dandy fur the whiskey, an' was talkin' of the spirits at the Lion, they laughed an' said all the spirits we found in the Red Lion that night we'd find in the jugs."

Rush had stepped to the door to see the party off in the morning, and stood watching them, but not thinking of them, as they wound up the path and disappeared over Possum Knob. He then returned to the kitchen and sat looking in the fire for an hour, musing. His mind was busy with perplexing doubts. He felt uncertain whether Rinemond had or had not intended to deceive him, and had disposed of the bundle before he reached the Lion, uncertain whether the apparitions were really supernatural or simulated, uncertain whether—the supernatural admitted—there were or were not men also about the inn, endeavoring to drive them off by performing the grosser acts of bewilderment. If Rinemond did not bring the bundle here, why did his specter seem to carry it into the back yard and return without it? To carry on the deception perhaps, by a law of the invisible world, as a part of his punishment for that special deed intended in the flesh. What had become of the vision chamber? Was it possible his mind had become unhinged, and it was all an hallucination produced by revery?

One of these doubts might be solved. If men were about the house, they must somewhere have left some trace of their presence. He rose from his seat and went up to the garret where he had noticed a pair of old felt slippers, and, putting them on, began his search. Room by room, and floor by floor, he went over the entire building until he reached the ground. He then took a lunch and a glass of whiskey, and rested for a time. Then going to the cellar, the door of which was open, he descended quietly, and sat down in the dark and listened, falling into a train of thought. A noise aroused him that seemed to come from the farthest apartment, into which opened the wine-cave. He stole up the steps to the kitchen, lighted a candle, and returned, pistol in hand. He moved cautiously and slowly on until he reached the last room and saw before him the wine-cave door ajar. He approached and, drawing it wide open, looked in. His light disclosed the front half of the cave, and left the rear in darkness. After a brief hesitation, he entered and walked back, cast his light about, and turned to retreat. As he did so, he saw the massive door slowly coming to, and made a rush. When he reached it, it was closed, and he heard the bolt shoot into the socket. He threw his weight against it, and broke into a cold perspiration. He was trapped—the thought passed through his mind—like a rat! His high courage

deserted him. He felt as he had never felt before, utterly helpless. The light was extinguished, the cave in utter darkness. He listened for some movement or noise outside, but he heard nothing ; all was silent. After a time, the cold from the damp ground chilled him, and his knees began to give way. He was unnerved. The many barrels and boxes that had once littered the place long after their contents had sparkled on the once famous table of the old Red Lion had been gradually removed for humbler uses, until, when Rush walked in with his candle and made his inspection, there was nothing but the floor of earth and arched walls of rough stone, both damp and cold. The door was of great thickness, studded with iron, made strong to protect the once precious stores within. The air was heavy and foul, and soon his breathing became oppressed. His clothing was light, and his feet shod with the thin-soled slippers that he had put on in the garret. He had come down without his hat. There was nothing to sit down on but the ground, and, his feet getting benumbed with cold, and his weakness increasing, he began to walk, holding out his arms and extending his fingers as the phantom had done in traversing the hall. The resemblance struck him and increased his dismay. He groped his way to and fro in the dark for hours, until his legs refused to longer support him, when he stripped off his coat and, lay-

ing it on the ground, sat down and leaned his back against the wall. But, finding the cold stone was chilling him, he put his handkerchief on the ground in front to put his feet on, and leaned forward with his face in his hands and his elbows on his knees and shivered in despair. He never expected to see the light again. When the men returned on the following morning and missed him, they would think he had found the bundle and gone off to avoid dividing it, or had been made way with in the night by the phantom. If he fired his pistol while they chanced to be in the house, its dull reverberation, if it penetrated the walls of his prison, would sound like a supernatural echo, and drive them the quicker away.

He resigned himself to his fate, and began to think over his past life. His native village rose up first before him. Scene after scene of his boyhood came one after another to his mind. He recalled a desperate fight with a schoolmate in recess who had taunted him, and how the boys around who had joined in the sneer applauded and courted him when he came out victorious. The blood rushed to his face as the scene came before his mental vision, fresh and clear as the day of the combat. He thought of his mother, and regretted he had not sent her more money, and gone to see her since his return from the South. This brought his career in that country to his

mind, and, as he thought it over, and of the loss of his accumulations, and of Rosedow and the fate of his friend Rinemond, there came to his mind Sam's quotation of Slugger about money, and he began to rock himself, and broke the silence of his dungeon for the first time since the door mysteriously closed on him, exclaiming aloud in a hoarse, singing tone:

"What is money? What is money?"

His mind seemed now partially to give way, and he went on for hours, rocking and singing at intervals.

As night advanced, he fell into a broken and fitful slumber, from which he awoke from time to time, and broke out into the refrain:

"What is money? What is money? Don't go, Sam; what is money?"

CHAPTER XV.

THE FORTUNE HUNTERS ARE PUT TO ROUT.

WHEN the sun rose on Monday morning and began to glimmer through the pine tops on the eastern hill, he caught the inhabitants of the Coon, for the first time in his existence, buried in slumber. It was the first time within Mirandy's recollection that he had risen before her. That young woman had sat up with the men in the bar-room until a very late hour, ignoring the suggestion of her father to retire to the kitchen, and, in consequence, had the mortification to find herself beaten up by the sun. Breakfast was therefore late, and the morning was advanced before the three phantom-ridden men took their departure for the Red Lion to seek the remains of Rush, their late companion, and to lock up the old inn. It had been admitted on all sides the night before that Mr. Rankin was "no more."

"Take the keys, Yost," said Slugger, "to the station and leave them at the groc'ry. They have no fear of spirits there, and they have no call to be afeard. No decent spirit would hant a station, with all the clatter and noise, not if he

was in his right mind. I'd like to accommodate you by keepin' of 'em at the Coon, but I couldn't, not sence they've begun a-whiskin' men off."

"It's all right, Slugger," said Yost. "I wouldn't ask it of you, and I'm obliged to you for keeping them as long as you have."

"You Sam," called out Mirandy, coming to the door as they were walking off. "Stop there a minute, all of you; I've got a word to speak before you go. The things that Mr. Rankin's left behind him is mine. That's who they belong to for to pay for Dandy's hire and his tail. And you bring them back with you, and don't ride Dandy too hard. If he's a-sweatin' much when he gets home, you'll ketch it."

Sam promised to carry out her orders to the letter, and the men set out in single file over the hill. They were each more or less afflicted with a headache, and preserved a mournful silence until they reached the summit of Possum Knob, where they halted to take observations before descending to the field of battle. Gathering clouds had obscured the sun, and the old inn beneath them with its surroundings, embosomed in a forest of dark pine, looked gloomy and ghost-like. Dandy was not in sight, and was pronounced to have been abducted, but was, in fact, in his paddock, hidden from their view by the house, with his neck over the fence, gazing mournfully at the forbidden water-trough. All the doors in sight were wide

open ; but there was no sign of Rush or any living thing. Resuming their route, they descended the hill and, passing through the hole in the garden fence, entered the kitchen by the back hall door.

The fire was out, the bottle of milk stood on the table unopened, the great bundle of keys lay beside it surrounded by the litter of yesterday's breakfast, Rush's hat stood on the window sill. A spider had dropped a thread on it from above, and was weaving a web from the crown to the rim. The men looked about them in dismay.

"We may as well lock up and leave," said Yost. "But we must carry these things back to the garret first. Lay hold of those beds," he added, taking up the keys, "and come on."

"Won't they keep down here, Mr. Yost?" said Sam. "I don't keer about goin' up stairs much."

"No," answered Yost, "Hollanda won't like it ; they must go up."

"Well, then," said Sam, "I move we take some spirits before we begin, to kind o' fortify ourselves like." This was acceded to, and the work began. On entering the garret, Sam let his burden fall, and, pointing to the floor, exclaimed:

"By George! There's his shoes."

They started back at the sight, as Robinson Crusoe at the footprint in the sand. The ghost of Rush would scarcely have startled them more. As they came down, they went out on the front

upper porch and looked into the Rinemond chamber. On a chair near the door stood Rush's carpet-sack, packed; and on it lay folded up his overcoat; and in front on the floor were the shoes he had slipped off and lost in his pursuit of the phantom. A silk umbrella leaned against the back of his chair, and over it hung his gloves.

"Jist prepared to go away of hisself," muttered Sam in an awestruck tone, "when they come an' snaked him off; what a outrage!"

"It's awful," said Barney.

"Them things belong to Miss Mirandy," said Sam. "Step in an' bring 'em out, Mr. Barney, if you please."

"You had better go in," answered Barney; "she ordered you to get them."

"The spirit's got a mortal spite agin me," said Sam, "or I would; an' I think you're a favo*rite* with him. He won't tech you; go in."

Thus abjured, Barney entered and brought out the things; and the men returned to the kitchen. A neigh from Dandy now called attention to the fact that he was still in the land of the living; and Sam took up the bucket to water him, recognizing his challenge as an appeal for a supply of that liquid.

"You take up the rest of the furnitur' to the garret, gentle*men*," said Sam, "while I water Dandy an' saddle him up; an' leave the knives

an' forks an' little things to go up in the bucket when I git back."

After giving the two men abundant time to carry up the remaining furniture, Sam appeared in the back-yard with Dandy, who made a movement toward the smoke-house, thinking it, probably, his destiny to go in again and get shaved.

"No, Dandy," said Sam, "no more of that durned work; a-takin' of ponies into smoke-houses an' a-shavin' of their tails off is played out," and with that he hitched him, and returned to the kitchen with the bucket, and began to stow into it the knives and spoons. All that now deferred their immediate departure from the inn was this bucket, and, as Sam finished packing it, he stood up and gazed about for any article that might have been overlooked.

"Where's the candlestick?" he said. "I don't see no candlestick."

"Maybe the spirits took it," said Barney, looking around. "It's nowhere here."

"Spirits don't use no candles," said Sam; "they manufactur' their own light as they go along. It's Mr. Rankin has took it; that's where it has gone."

"Where do you think he could have gone with it, Sam?" asked Barney. "He didn't need a light in the daytime, and he was off when the boy came over in the afternoon."

"He went to the cellar," said Sam. "I'll bet

he's a-lyin' in a fit on the cellar floor this minit. Let's take a drink an' go down an' look for him."

They all took a drink, and Sam, with a lighted candle in his hand, led the way to the cellar, each armed with a stick of wood from the pile by the fireside. Passing cautiously through the front apartments, they observed, on entering the last, the heavy wine-cave door that had resisted their efforts to open on their previous visits slightly ajar. At this unlooked-for sight, Sam, enthused with the hope of rescuing his free-handed employer, and stimulated by the previous visit to the jug, rushed forward and threw it wide open. Then, recoiling a few paces, he held the candle up and peered into the dark recess. In a few moments there emerged from the gloom into the halo cast by the feeble light a staggering, bent figure, with snow-white hair. Sam dropped the candle with a shriek and fled, followed by his companions. The figure picked up the unextinguished light, and slowly made its way out of the cellar, and entered the kitchen at the moment Sam, with the jug tilted over his arm, was pouring out a drink. At this second sight, he again gave utterance to an exclamation of alarm, and, starting back, the jug slipped from his nerveless grasp and, falling to the hearthstone, broke, and the contents were absorbed by the ashes or ran in devious rills over the floor.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Rush in

a querulous, low, hoarse tone. "Don't you know me? Give me a cup of whiskey," he added, taking an abandoned chair; "and Barney, build up a big fire. Why, you all act like crazy men."

Seeing his overcoat on the carpet-sack, he put it on, and called for his hat. The stimulant and blazing fire soon restored him, and, looking about the room, he said:

"What's become of the furniture, and who packed my carpet-sack? What time of day is it?"

"It's about noon," answered Sam, with staring eyes.

"What are you looking at me in that way for?" said Rush impatiently. "What's the matter with me?"

"Your hair, Mr. Rankin," said Sam.

"What's the matter with my hair?" asked Rush.

"Turned white as snow," said Sam.

Rush rose and walked to the window, where he caught a dim reflection of his head and face, and, turning, resumed his seat by the fire, and gazed into it in silence.

"The furniture," said Yost, "we packed away in the garret, and we found your things packed in your room in your sack, and your shoes ready to put on."

"What shoes?" asked Rush, looking up.

"Them," said Sam, picking them up and laying them down in front of him.

Rush looked curiously at them, picked them up, turned them over, and put them on.

"I saw the pony saddled in the yard," he said, "as I came in. You were about leaving?"

"Yes," said Yost, "when that bucket of things had got to the garret, we'd have been off, and for good."

"Heavens, what a narrow escape!" exclaimed Rush. "And what took you to the cellar at the last moment?"

"Sam," answered Yost; "the credit is due to him. Tell Mr. Rankin how it occurred to you, Sam."

"Well, you see, Mr. Rankin, it happened this a-way," said Sam. "They was takin' up the things, an' I tuk the bucket an' went out to water Dandy, an' I saddled an' bridled him, an' led him into the yard, an' I tied him where you seen him tied when you come up. Well, I come in an' filled the bucket with small things, an' it come over me thet somethin' was wrong, an' I stood up an' looked about an' missed somethin', an' I said, 'Wherever is the candlestick?' an' Mr. Barney sez, 'The ghost's got it,' an' I sez, 'It hain't; a ghost's got no call for a candlestick; Mr. Rankin's got it, that's who's got it, an' he's gone to the cellar with it, an' he's a-lyin' down there now on his back in a fit, an' we'll take a drink fust an' go fur him,'—an' we did, an' we seen the cave door open a little way, an' so I

pulled it wide open, an' you come out an' skeered us, an' we lit, an' that's how it was exactly."

Rush thought a little while and drew his pocket-book from the inner lining of his vest, and handed Sam some bank-notes.

"Here Sam," he said, "is a hundred dollars for you. Stop coon-hunting and bundle-hunting, and get married and settle down."

"Great Jerusalem!" exclaimed Sam. "Who ever heerd of that much money in a bunch? I'll save up," he muttered to himself, as he put away the notes, "an' buy the Wild Cat Holler next Raccoon, an' put in fur Miss Mirandy, an' git her too, by George!"

"What kind of a place is Wildcat Hollow?" inquired Rush, who overheard him.

"It has a good cabin an' spring-house," said Sam, "an' every thin' any man on earth needs, an' some as good land as Raccoon's got. It's a nice place, an' the widder wants to sell an' go live with her daughter. I'll lay up, an' I'll git it yit; you mind ef I don't, Mr. Rankin."

"What's the price?" inquired Rush.

"One hundred an' ninety is the takin' price," answered Sam. "The widder's askin' price is two hundred and fifty. I found it out this a-way, Mr. Rankin. I sez to myself when you went away before, ef I find this here bundle an' keep it safe fur Mr. Rankin, mebbe he'll give me enough fur

my sheer to buy the Wildcat Holler, an' then I kin go fur Mirandy; so I felt purty sure I'd find the bundle, an' I dropped in to spend the evenin' at the widder's fur to circumvent her. So I tole her that I knowed a man who was a comin' into a inheritance, an' he thought of buyin' an' marryin' an' settlin' down in life, an' givin' up coon-huntin' an' chicken-fightin' an' sich like, an' I could sell fur her ef she'd give me her takin' price right out in money down, without no worry about the askin' price, an' ef she would to give it up, an' ef she wouldn't to forever hold her tongue. And she said, 'Sam, I'll be honest with you. You want the Wildcat Holler fur yourself and Miss Mirandy, I know you do, an' there ain't no man a-goin' to get no inheritance, but ef you and Miss Mirandy hit it off, Slugger kin give you the money; and my takin' price, but mind you keep it secret,' she said, 'is, to you an' Mirandy, mind, one hundred and ninety, cash'; an' she was so close she didn't speak it out nuther, but wrote the figures down in the ashes with a stick; an' that's how I cum to know, Mr. Rankin."

"Sam," said Rush, "you have earned Wildcat Hollow from me to-day, and you shall have it," and he gave him ninety more. "Go buy to-morrow before it is sold to some one else."

"Why, Mr. Rankin," said Sam, "I was goin' to pay fifteen of this to Miss Mirandy fur the pony. She said she wouldn't hev Dandy no more, an' I

must bring her back fifteen fur him, which is her takin' price, an' I kin make it up in a few months sellin' coon skins."

"No, Sam," said Rush, "you must buy the Hollow to-morrow. Here is the price of Dandy, and the hire, and tell Mirandy I am much obliged to her. The groceries you had better pack up and take home with you, and hide them at the cross road until you come back, for I want you to go to the station with me. Does the saddle and bridle go with Dandy?"

"Yes, Mr. Rankin," answered Sam, "Miss Mirandy said let him take Dandy, mane an' tail, saddle an' bridle. I don't want to see hide nor hair of him agin. Them was her very words. She was so mighty put out about the spirit a-cuttin' off his tail, as she called it, though I told her it was on'y shaved."

"Yost," said Rush, "let's be off. Barney, bring out the things. Sam, lead round the pony to the front door. I must go up to the city on the evening train. I don't think I'll ever set foot in the Red Lion again, 'not fur no bundle,' as Sam would say."

When they reached the station they bade good-by to Sam, and Rush told him to keep Dandy, saddle and bridle, as a wedding present, and to use him in cultivating Wildcat Hollow; and they boarded the train and were off before Sam could give utterance to the elaborate address of grati-

tude that was working within him. After watching the train until it disappeared, he mounted Dandy and rode over to the grocery and proposed to deposit the keys of the Red Lion with them. The grocer answered, "Certainly," and tossed them under the counter.

"You don't seem afeard of 'em much," said Sam.

"Why should I?" said the grocer.

"On account of the ghost a-follerin' after 'em," said Sam.

"There ain't no ghosts," said the grocer.

"There is ghosts," said Sam, "an' you daren't spend a night in the Old Red Lion fur all your wuth. I've spent nights there, an' I've been paid fur it. Look at that hoss. He's mine, saddle and bridle; I got him fur contendin' with the Red Lion sperit an' not bein' afeard. Don't give the keys to nobody but me an' the gentleman you see ride up on Dandy. Mr. Rankin's his name. He's got a right to go in, fur he's sunk money there, bushels of it."

"Well, if I ever saw the like!" exclaimed Mirandy, indignantly, as Sam rode to the door of the Coon on Dandy, loaded down with groceries and the remaining jug.

"Don't git mad, Miss Mirandy," interrupted Sam, hastily. "I've brought the money fur you, an' Dandy's mine; give to me fur openin' the door of the Wildcat—the wine-cave, I mean—an'

a-lettin' Mr. Rankin out. All these groceries is mine, too," he continued, unloading Dandy, "and I want Mr. Slugger to walk over with me to Wildcat Holler on a little business I've got over that a-way."

"Come in, Sam," said Slugger, "and tell us the news."

"I won't go into no man's house agin," said Sam, highly excited, "until I walk into my own. I'm a-goin' over this minute to Wildcat to buy the widder out; an' I want two honest witnesses to swear to her takin' of the hand money."

"Wait, Sam," said Mirandy, softly, "till I git my things on, and we'll go with you. I owe the widder a visit anyway."

"Mr. Slugger," said Sam, "I'll borry your pen an' ink, for I misdoubt ef there is any at Wildcat, an' a piece of paper; an' we'll fix that widder so she can't back out nohow. I'm a-goin' to git married, Mr. Slugger, an' stop coon-huntin'—that is, ef Miss Mirandy'll hev me."

"I suspect she'll take you, Sam," said Slugger, "'specially if you deal fur the Holler. It adjines the Raccoon, and will be a strong temptation to Mirandy. But no man kin tell whether a gal is goin' to say yes or no before she's asked—they're so tarnal freaky."

CHAPTER XVI.

OLD GILES ON THE TRAIL.

THE night of the return of the party from their unsuccesful visit to the Red Lion, Hollanda drew from Yost a full account of their awful experience and failure. The following forenoon she repeated it to Madison, after Pilot and Barney had gone to the office, Rush being confined to his bed with a rheumatic fever.

"The apparitions must have been frightful," she said. "This makes me resolved to find the bundle and get it out of the old Red Lion. When it goes the spirit of Rinemond will go, and not before. And it will not rest anywhere on earth, in my opinion, until his children get what he left, or his wife gets it, or some one he was interested in. But, Mr. Decker, if they all failed after so careful a search, how can you hope to find it? It doesn't seem reasonable to me that you only can succeed."

"Mrs. Yost," answered Madison, "I do not claim to be the only one who can find the bundle; but I do say that I am one of a very few

who can. I know an old man in the mountains of Giles who would walk straight to where that bundle is hid if you took him to the house; and you will find, when we go down, that it will not be long before I put my hand on it. It takes a thoroughbred hunter—and they don't grow in cities, or near them—to find a faint trail and follow it. The main trouble with city people is that they are too smart, which is a worse failing than not being smart enough. They think the man they are tracking has been wonderfully sharp, when the chances are he has been no such thing; and they look too high up and too far away for a trail that is under their nose. The more men look for a bundle and fail the more chance a hunter has to find it. To the place a man has gone to hide a thing another may go to find it. Tell me what you know of Rinemond, his appearance, what he said and did on the night of his arrival. A glimpse at his character will help; a dog will hide a bone in the ground; a cat will hide a dead bird in the branch of a tree."

"Mr. Decker," said Hollanda, "I will call Alva, and have him tell you; he knows what occurred, and was the only one in the Lion besides Rinemond that night."

"I have told Alva what I intend to do," she said, as she re-entered the room with Yost, and he will tell you exactly what happened."

"Hollanda tells me, Mr. Decker," said Yost, "that she thinks you can find the Rinemond bundle."

"I can find it the quicker," said Madison, "if I know the kind of man that hid it. Was he a bold man or a timid one?"

"He was bold and self-confident," said Yost.

"Then he lay down near it," said Madison, "and slept with one eye on it."

"I don't know about that," said Yost. "I thought I heard the back hall door open in the night; and I think he took it out and hid it."

"Not he," answered Madison, "and you may have been mistaken about the door having been opened; there is nothing on earth more deceptive than a noise at night. Tell me what occurred after he arrived and until he went to his room."

"Well," answered Yost, "he went to his room as soon as he registered, and said he was tired and would go to bed; but, before doing so, he wrote a letter that was found on the table in the morning by the coroner, and I took a copy of it in a book, and will show it to you if you would like to see it."

"I should like very much to see it," answered Madison, and Yost brought in the "Mysteries of Udolpho" and handed it to him open at the place. Madison read it carefully.

"Very well," he said, handing back the book,

"the man who wrote that didn't hide a bone with meat on it a mile from the bed he slept in."

"Well," said Yost, "I hope you may find it, for Hollanda will have no rest until it is out of the Red Lion. It must go to the heirs, though, if found."

"If they can be found," answered Madison, "every dollar of it; if not, we three shall determine what shall be done with it. I wish to speak in confidence to you," he continued, "about another matter. I have spoken to you, Mrs. Yost, about our relative, Mr. Decker, of Rosedow. The old gentleman has received a document, and it is much to his interest to know who signed it. I suspect your lodger, Rush, is the man, and wish you would get me a scrap of his writing. It is right that Mr. Decker should know, and it may save him from a heavy loss. Could you get me something this morning, no matter what, from his table?"

"I will try," she answered, and, going into the dining-room, prepared a lemonade and carried it to him.

"Take this, Mr. Rush," she said, placing it on a stand at his bed-head, "and I will put your room a little to rights."

He thanked her, and, raising up, drank a portion of the lemonade. She moved about, putting the chairs against the wall, and approaching the table, hidden from his sight by the footboard of

the bed, took up and slipped under her apron a piece of paper headed, "To the *Evening News*," and carried it down to Madison. He drew from his pocket two documents, the transfers from Thaddeus and John Outcalt of their interests to Mr. Decker, and carefully compared the writing.

"The body of these documents is in a disguised hand, but Rush wrote them; the signatures, though, are not by him, but the same man signed them both, and that man I want to find."

"Let me look at them," said Hollanda, who, with her husband, was deeply interested.

"It looks to me like Barney's hand," said Hollanda; "go to the office and get him to write something."

Madison, as he approached the office, saw Pilot walking away. As he turned a distant corner Barney came out and walked down rapidly and turned his corner on his way to the "Two Goats." Madison entered and, going to the table, drew out his papers and compared the handwriting with that of a document Pilot had just left partly finished. Then going over to Barney's desk, he picked up a scrap on which had lately been scribbled the names of many Deckers. Among them his own name, Madison Decker, figured in divers places; and, near the bottom of the list, the names of those visionary beings, Thaddeus and John Outcalt appeared. Madison held the signatures together, and in a moment

saw that he had found his man, the unconscious Barney, then innocently disporting himself at the "Goats." He folded the scrap and placed it with the other papers in his pocket, and lighted a cigar and sat down to await the coming of the guilty clerk.

"Mr. Barney," he said, as that personage entered the office some half-hour after, "how long will Mr. Pilot be absent?"

"He has gone over to Brooklyn," answered Barney; "he said he would not be back for several hours."

"Then we will have our little talk here," said Madison. "Do you know I have discovered, Barney, that you are one of our family, a Decker and an heir?"

"Then I must have been exchanged in the cradle," said Barney.

"You *were* exchanged in the cradle," said Madison; "that's just how it occurred; truth, you know, is stranger than fiction. You are the owner of an interest and can sell out to-morrow for a large sum, if you like. What do you say?"

"Why, I know you are joking, Mr. Decker," he answered, "but, of course, I would be glad to sell if I really had an interest."

"Very good," said Madison, "you have an interest, and there is a demand for it, and you can sell to-morrow."

"Who to?" inquired Barney.

"Pilot and Rush will take it between them, and give you eighty thousand for it," said Madison.

Barney turned pale, glanced at his desk, and missed the paper he had been scribbling on.

"There's nothing to be alarmed at, Barney," said Decker; "it is a very simple transaction, and will not harm you in the least. Draw up two bills of sale, one to Pilot and one to Rush, for forty thousand dollars each, dated to-morrow, and sign them."

Barney, with a trembling hand, drew up the papers and handed them over the table.

"Sign your name to them," said Madison.

"My own name, Mr. Decker?" asked Barney.

"Certainly," answered Madison, "your own name, of course. In the morning we will close with Pilot first, and you will quit his service and settle with him, and I will give you better wages and a better chance to rise. I will give you a couple of bills of sale to Decker, of Rosedow, to burn up. You can recall them if you think a moment, and would like to put them in the fire, would you not?"

"Yes, Mr. Decker," he answered, in a subdued tone, "if you would be so kind."

"I give you my word you shall have them, if you are faithful and silent. Before this time to-morrow, you may destroy them with your own hand and be a free man. We understand each other?"

"Perfectly," answered Barney; "I will be silent and do what you tell me. I will be only too glad to serve you. They have weighed on my mind enough. I shall be a happy man when I see them in ashes."

"Here they are," said Madison, holding them up before him, "signed Thaddeus and Outcalt Decker. You see I have them."

Barney saw but too well, and cowered.

"And to-morrow," added Madison, "you may send them up the chimney in smoke."

"I hope you will be easy on the gentlemen," said Barney; "they have been kind to me."

"I shall do them no harm," answered Madison, "beside selling them your valuable interest in our family estate. Where can we meet the policeman on this beat, and have a quiet talk with him?"

"The 'Two Goats' has a back room that you can have to yourself. It is a short distance round the corner."

"What sort of a man is the day policeman, and what are his hours on?"

"He is a pleasant man," answered Barney. "He has often taken a drink with me at the 'Goats.' He is on from six A. M. to six P. M."

"Go out and arrange to meet him at eight o'clock at the 'Goats.' Tell him he will get a fee for his trouble," said Madison.

"He says he'll be there on time," said Barney, on returning from his mission.

"How did Pilot and Rush divide?" asked Madison. "Even, I suppose?"

"I think they did, Mr. Decker. That is what I thought from what I heard them say. They gave me a trifle, but I have spent it. I can work it out, though, if that will do."

"Keep it, and say nothing about it," answered Madison. "Where does Rush keep his share?"

"I think he has it in his trunk, for he got a new lock, and a strange one, a few days after the division. But Mr. Pilot, I think, carries his about with him."

"I know where Pilot has his," said Madison. "Meet me at the 'Goats' about eight."

In the evening Madison made inquiry after the condition of Rush, and found that the doctor had expressed the opinion that he would be confined to his bed for several weeks. He was resting comfortably at the time, and Mrs. Yost went up and said to him that Mr. Decker, the new lodger, wished to come up and make his acquaintance. Pilot had given him an account of Madison's rupture with Rosedow and his purpose to settle in the city, and Rush had thought it might be well to cultivate him, and aid and advise him in his real estate purchases and sales. He readily consented to see him, and he was introduced by Hollanda as her Virginia relative. Rush looked sharply at him as he entered, and recalled his

driving up the hill as he and Pilot rolled in triumph through the iron gate of Rosedow.

"Mr. Decker," he said, "I caught a glimpse of you on Rosedow hill, and am glad to make your acquaintance."

"I am sorry to see you in bed, sir," said Madison. "I hope you will soon be up. Exposure in traveling, I suppose, brought you down."

"Sleeping in a damp room did it," said Rush. "It will be a warning to me."

"I have slept, sir," said Madison, "in the mountains of Giles—Giles County, Virginia, sir—in the snow many a night, and never the suspicion of a cold. My theory, sir, is that all colds are caught indoors, and I believe in it."

"I dare say you are right," answered Rush; "mine was caught, decidedly, indoors. Your family, I understand, sold out their interest in the Decker estate?"

"Yes," answered Madison, "and my father is rather ruing his bargain already, and would like to hedge a little."

"Perhaps I may be of service to him when I recover," said Rush. "I have just returned from a tour among the Deckers, and know of several who want to sell. In fact, it was in a Decker house I caught my rheumatism."

"I will talk with you again about buying an interest," said Madison. "I suppose you will be out of bed in a day or two?"

"I fear not so soon," he answered. "I don't believe I could get out of bed now if the house was afire."

"I will call to-morrow, if you feel well enough, and talk over the Decker affair. Say some time in the forenoon."

"Very well," he answered. "I shall be glad to see you. You will be sure to find me in."

When Madison arrived at the "Two Goats" in the evening, he found Barney in front of the door in conversation with the policeman, and was introduced by him to that officer, a Mr. Lynch, a rather diminutive and thin but spirited executive.

"Glad to make your acquaintance, Lynch," said Madison. "Let us walk into the back room."

"I will give orders at the bar as we pass," said Lynch, "that we are not to be intruded on, sir."

"Now, Lynch," said Madison, as they took their seats at a table. "I want you to do me a little service in the line of your duty to-morrow, and if we come out successful I will give you a fifty-dollar fee. You see I like being candid in the start, so that we can understand each other. It's a good plan, is it not?"

"It is, sir," answered Lynch, "none better."

"There are two men on your beat," said Madison, "who have a lot of money that don't belong

to them. I want you to go with us in the morning, and if they disgorge let them go, and if not arrest them."

"If you get out a warrant, I shall have to arrest them whether or no," said Lynch, "and if you don't I will have no authority to act on. Couldn't you get your money and arrest them too?"

"One of them is a connection of mine," answered Madison, "and I don't like to disgrace the family. If I promise to let them go, they will pay up; otherwise I may not get it, or all of it. You would be justified in holding them until we get a warrant. That's the law where I came from; but they will fork over, if you are on hand ready to arrest them."

"Very well," said Lynch. "I'll stand by you, sir, and if I should get into trouble you will see me through with the chief."

"I will come to No. 10 Fish Street at nine in the morning," said Madison. "When you see me go in, walk up and stand at the curbstone in front of the window. I may not call you in at all. I think not."

"I will bring a pair of handcuffs with me," said Lynch, "and if he's obstreperous I'll clasp them on him. We may as well break the law in style, Mr. Decker, if we break it at all. In for a lamb, sir, in for a sheep."

"By the way, Lynch," said Madison, "when

you take your stand on the curb, you can hold the cuffs in your hands so we can see them from the window."

"I'll do so, Mr. Decker," said Lynch; "the sight of them's a powerful persuader at times; I've known 'em to soften the hardest heart that words couldn't move, and I'll give them an accidental shake when I see you at the window. The rattle of them has a fine effect, sir, on the nerves, and breaks them down."

When Madison returned to Yost's, Hollanda informed him that Mr. Pilot was in Rush's room, and they had sent down to invite him up. He was received with great politeness, and found the gentlemen in fine spirits. A pitcher of iced lemonade and a bottle of wine were on the table, and a bunch of Havana cigars. They sat in conversation until near midnight, Rush propped up in bed, and taking his full share in all that went on. Real estate was discussed, and instances given of fortunes acquired in two or three years by persons buying outlots and tracts of land through which existing thoroughfares extended would pass. Rush gave an account of his recent visits to the provincial Deckers, how he found them enthused over the near approach of the division of the Amsterdam money, and all disposed to hold to their interests, or asking prices beyond the purse of Astor, save here and there a farmer who, to lift a mortgage, was reasonable. One, he said,

who holds an interest of the identical value of the one sold by Decker of Giles, had offered him a fair fee to sell at five thousand. He had mentioned this to Mr. Pilot, and he had suggested sending down for Mr. Decker and giving him the information.

"I thought," said Pilot, "that, as you would have to communicate with your father, there would be considerable delay at the best, and delays are dangerous. I had a client who lost a fortune by taking time to give an answer. He had an offer of a tract beyond the suburbs, and while he was making up his mind a sale was effected to another party. Within twelve months three streets were pushed through it and graded, and, on an investment of eight thousand, he realized over a hundred and fifty. My client bemoaned his ill-luck to me, but I said to him, 'My friend, delays are dangerous; there was no luck in it; put the blame where it belongs.'"

"What do you think the interest is worth," asked Madison, "now the appeal is taken?"

"My attorney in Amsterdam writes me that the appeal will be set aside in six or eight months, at the furthest."

"I wouldn't let that influence me," said Rush, "if I had the money to go in any deeper, but my last thousand went into the estate on my last visit to the country, and I got better terms, but not much, than this last chance offered your father."

"Suppose my father," said Madison, "can't screw his courage up to five thousand, do you think it could be got for less?"

"I tell you honestly," answered Rush, "I don't think it can, but if your father will risk the delay, and a strong chance of losing the bargain, let him send on his best offer, and, if it has not been snapped up in the meantime, I'll see what I can do."

"I've got money enough to buy it myself," said Madison. "Can I meet you in your office at nine o'clock sharp, Mr. Pilot? I'll sleep on it, and maybe we will deal for an interest in the morning; but I don't know; as they say down in Old Giles, a man shouldn't carry all his eggs in the same basket."

"Hooked," said Rush triumphantly, as Madison left the room and closed the door; "the Deckers are not all dead, and this one is the biggest fool left alive in the illustrious family."

CHAPTER XVII.

DEFEAT OF PILOT AND THE FLIGHT OF RUSH.

WHEN Madison entered the office on the following morning, Lynch was rapidly approaching; and he found Barney at his desk, and Pilot ready to receive him.

"Well, Mr. Pilot," he said, "I have made up my mind to make a deal in the Decker stock this morning."

"In anticipation of your decision," said Pilot, "I have drawn up a transfer from Rush, as attorney for Sydney Decker, of Cohansey, Cumberland County, New Jersey. We can take a notary public to Rush's room and have the paper executed, and deposit it with your check to await a transfer signed by Decker himself. It will be better, and will take but a few days."

"Yes," said Madison, "that will be best. And now, Mr. Pilot, I have an astounding piece of intelligence to communicate to you, calculated, as we say in Giles, to dumbfound a body. I made the discovery only yesterday that Mr. Barney is a descendant of our old friend, Hendrik Dekker, and is the heir to an interest in the great

estate exactly equal to the two shares sold by Messrs. Thaddeus and John Outcalt Decker to the old gentleman at Rosedow for the sum total of eighty thousand dollars. Barney, being rather impecunious at present, expressed a desire to sell, and at my suggestion drew up two bills of sale, one to you, and one to Mr. Rush, for forty thousand each. I told him he ought to give you an opportunity to buy rather than to seek a purchaser in the open market. I knew you would not let such a chance slip through your fingers; and for fear some outside parties may snap it up—for delays, as you very truly remarked last night, are dangerous—I advise you, as a friend, to close at once, pay over to Barney the forty thousand on the nail, as we say in Old Giles, and run no risks."

Pilot, who had sat intently watching Madison, got up as he concluded, and, walking to a stand in the corner, drank a glass of water; and, returning, leaned his back against the mantel.

"Silence gives consent," said Madison. "Barney, hand out your bill of sale. It was drawn up in advance, Pilot, in anticipation of your decision. Here you have it, and Barney wants his money; he distinctly stated that he must have the entire payment cash down."

"Where am I to get such a sum of money on a moment's warning," asked Pilot hoarsely. "I must have time to realize. The interest is worth

the money, and I will buy and give my note at sixty days. I can't gather up that amount sooner."

"It will not take near that length of time," answered Madison, "to take your coat and vest off and get at the pocket in your flannel shirt. This is strictly a cash transaction, Mr. Pilot. I know it's an embarrassing thing for a gentleman to strip before company, but there's no help for it."

Pilot made a movement toward the back door, but Madison, who was nearer to it, turned the key in the lock and put it in his pocket.

"I suppose you are aware, Mr. Decker," said Pilot, "that you are laying yourself open to arrest for robbery?"

"Arrest away," answered Madison.

"You and Barney have conspired to blackmail, that is certain," said Pilot, "and I can send you to the State prison."

"Before you send us, come with me to the window," said Madison, "I wish to say a word in private. Now, Pilot," he continued, when they had taken their position, "here is how the case stands. You and Rush must disgorge or go to prison, that is the long and short of it." At this moment their attention was attracted to Mr. Lynch on the curbstone, tossing the handcuffs in the air, and catching them, with a rattle, as they came down.

"I am Mr. Decker's prospective son-in-law," continued Madison, "and represent him in this matter. I have documents from the consul and bank at Amsterdam. All the papers you presented at Rosedow as coming from that quarter are forgeries; there is no deposit in the bank, big or little; the consul denounces you; your Butter Market associate is a man of straw. You are in the toil and there is but one loophole. Pay back and go free. Mr Decker may prosecute you or may not, after he gets back his money; until then, at least, you will be unmolested and can provide for your safety. The handcuffs the gentleman you may observe outside is amusing himself with are intended for you; and he has expressed his determination, if you make it necessary, to strip you here at the office, and to search your room at 501. Take my advice; fork over, shut up your office, and go west. What do you say?"

Pilot, casting a glance through the window at Lynch, who was gently swinging the handcuffs to and fro, turned back into the room and leaned against the mantel, with his eyes cast down in thought. After a few minutes he slowly took off his coat and vest and produced a packet from a pocket in his flannel shirt, and, sitting down, opened it and displayed a number of United States bonds.

"Here," he said, "are bonds covering the amount I received, less about the sum I gave to

Barney. I can make that good at my room at Yost's."

"Very well," said Madison, examining the bonds; "this is about right; I see you have not collected the overdue coupons."

"No," answered Pilot, "the bonds are there as I bought them. I want a receipt stating that the one-half of the Rosedow money has been refunded."

"Barney," said Madison, "draw up a receipt. And if you," turning to Pilot, "will put on your coat, we will adjourn to 501, and you can pay the balance due."

"I would take it as a favor," said Pilot, "if you will not let it appear at the house that I am watched. I wish to conceal the matter from my relative, Mrs. Yost. You can accommodate me in this, I suppose?"

"Certainly," said Madison; and the party, followed by Lynch, who put up his handcuffs, walked down to Yost's and entered the parlor. Pilot, requesting them to be seated, said he would go up and bring down the money. On reaching the upper floor, he went quickly to Rush's room. Rush rose on his elbow, smiling, and asked:

"Well, have you stripped the greenhorn?"

"No," answered Pilot bitterly, "the greenhorn has stripped me, and will strip you in a few minutes. He has a policeman in the parlor with the cuffs in his hand, ready for you. He has papers

from Amsterdam, the consul, and the bank, and Barney has turned state's evidence. You must pay back or run. It's pay or prison. Give me your bonds, and I will try to save them. I can get out the back way."

"So can I," answered Rush, springing from his bed and hurriedly dressing. "Go down and hold them off ten minutes, and as much longer as you can. Help, and we will divide. Meet me at the Brooklyn ferry at midnight."

Pilot went to his room, and a moment after Barney entered. He had been sent to watch him and see that he did not communicate with Rush; but Hollanda had stopped him in the hall; and the time lost in answering her questions concerning the presence of the policeman in the parlor was just snfficient to give the warning. Pilot packed a traveling bag and, taking what money he had, descended the stairs.

"Barney," he said, depositing the bag behind the stairway in the lower hall, "after I settle this matter, I intend to run down home for a few days to get out of the way of Hollanda's questions, and to take a little rest. I am a good deal shaken up, and need it. Don't say anything about this unfortunate business to any body, or it will drive me out of the city."

"I will keep dark, Mr. Pilot," answered Barney, "you may rely on it."

"The bonds cost," said Pilot on entering the

parlor and seating himself at the table, "within forty-six dollars of the amount I received. If you will calculate the interest on that sum to date, I will settle."

After Madison had made the calculation, Pilot went slowly over it and pronounced it correct, but objected to the rate. He thought the money was not yielding Mr. Decker over half the legal rate, and requested an abatement. Madison said the difference was insignificant, and he would not make a point of it; and a calculation at the lower figure was made and again slowly examined by Pilot. Some thirty minutes had now been consumed since Rush had received the warning, and Pilot interposed no further delay. He paid the balance over and leaned back in his chair.

Madison, calling on Barney and Lynch to follow him, ascended the stairs and knocked at Rush's door. Receiving no response, he turned the knob but found it locked. Barney stooped down and, looking through the hole, announced there was no key in the lock. Mrs. Yost was called, and with her master-key turned the bolt, and they entered. The room was vacant, and presented evidence of hasty flight. A chair overturned, and the open trunk with its contents scattered near, told the tale. They descended to the parlor to question Pilot. He was gone, and his carpet-sack had disappeared from under the stairway. Madison despatched Barney and Lynch to the police

station to give a description of Rush and have search made for him. He then sat down with Yost, who had just come in, and Mrs. Yost; and in a few words advised them of the situation. Yost took up a morning paper, and, looking over the shipping list, said:

"A steamer will leave at ten in the morning for Liverpool."

"He will not risk that," said Madison; "he will leave on a train, or more likely drive out and take a train at a country station."

"I wouldn't have believed it of Pilot," said Hollanda, "only I remember he tried to get me to sell my bonds and buy an interest. What dreadful creatures men are, after all!"

"You will find him hard to catch," said Yost. "I don't believe any of us will ever lay eyes on him again. Does he owe us anything, Hollanda?"

"They are both behind some," she answered, "but I don't mind that. What troubles me is their turning out so; two such nice men; it's awful!"

"Yes," said Madison, "he is smart. Where do you think it's likely he would go?"

"To some other city," answered Yost, "or maybe out West. He won't stop in the city long."

"No," said Madison, "he is on his way out now; but he won't pass through any city nor travel far on the train; he will fear the telegraph. If I were in his place, I would leave the city on

foot, and keep to the mud roads. But he doesn't know enough for that, being a city chap. They all take a train to get away quick. It is a mistake. It is not the bird that flies straight and far that gets away, but the bird that zigzags and takes short flights. Look at the snipe, the hardest bird to bag that flies. No, he will make the mistake and run the risk of starting on a train; but he is too sharp to stick to it long."

"I think you are right about it, Mr. Decker," said Hollanda; "he is very intelligent, and knows well the dangers of the telegraph."

"The mischief is," said Yost, "to know which road he has taken. You might stand a chance of finding him if you knew that."

"Well," said Madison, "it strikes me I know which road he has taken; and, if I wanted him, I would telegraph and have him arrested. But I don't want him. I want the bonds he is carrying off, and, if they arrest him, he will hide them or buy himself free, and then they would be gone. No, I will interview the gentleman myself; there are plenty of official rogues in the country besides cashiers and presidents of banks and companies."

"Why, how you talk, Mr. Decker," said Hollanda, in admiration. "I verily believe he will find Rush, Alva, and I know he'll find the bundle."

"If I didn't think I knew where to put my hand on him, Mrs. Yost," said Madison, "I

wouldn't be sitting here talking, but would be out on the hunt for his trail. Suppose, madam, you had been suddenly frightened this morning, and had run off to hide; where would you have gone?"

"Why, I would go to the Red Lion, of course; that is, if those who were after me didn't know it was my home. It is the quietest place to hide away in that I know of."

"And where would you hide, Mr. Yost?" pursued Madison.

"At the Lion," he answered. "That would be my first rush, though I might go on to Slugger's. Raccoon is out of the way, and if it wasn't for men dropping in there it would be about as solitary as the Lion."

"But the spirit at the Red Lion," answered Hollanda, "keeps everybody away. It's the best place to hide in."

"Very well," said Madison, "Rush knows the advantage of the Lion as a hiding-place as well as either of you do; and he is on his way there now; he may pass on to Slugger's, but he will sleep to-night at one place or the other."

"You are a wonderful man," said Hollanda.

"No, I am not," said Madison; "I am simply a good hunter. When I rouse game in the mountains, I know where it will go; and the sharper a man is the more like a wild animal he acts. This man is sick, and was suddenly scared up; he has taken to the best hiding-place that is fresh in

his mind, and not too far off. The minute he started, the Red Lion took possession of him and he couldn't go to any place else if he tried ; but he will not try. If he should give me the slip at the Lion, I will track him over the hills to Slugger's and nab him there. He is a wounded animal, madam, and I never took the trail of a wounded animal in my life that I didn't get him."

"When will you follow him?" inquired Yost.

"In the early morning train," answered Madison. "He will be glad enough to lie in bed late in the morning."

"I will go with you," said Hollanda, "and we will find the bundle. I can't rest until the bundle is gone from the Lion."

When Rush had dressed quickly, after receiving the warning, he opened his trunk and took out a package of bonds and his ready money ; and, throwing out the rest of the contents on the floor, selected a few articles and packed them in a carpet-bag. He walked to the head of the stairs, and, looking over the railing, listened a moment ; then quickly descended and left the house by the back door. He passed up the alley on which the rear of the premises opened, and, on crossing the street, happened on a passing hack, which he entered, and was driven, under the impulse of a liberal fare, on a gallop to the Jersey City ferry. On the boat he bought a morning paper and examined the time-table. He found he would

have a half-hour on the other side before the southern train left. On landing, he went to a grocery and bought and put in his bag some crackers, a can of potted meat, and a bottle of brandy; and, taking a drink at the bar, he returned to the station, where he bought a ticket to Washington City, and took his seat in the car. When the train reached Baker Station, he got out and took the by-road that led to the Old Red Lion.

While riding in the car, the excitement that had impelled him subsided, and as he walked out he became very weak. He was compelled to sit down by the road-side several times and resort to his bottle for strength to pursue his way. On reaching the Lion, he knelt down and took a long draught out of the water-trough, then walked round the building seeking an entrance. He found a narrow door that he remembered opened on a back stairway, and, getting a stick from the wood-pile, broke the lock and entered. Ascending the stairs, he made his way through many winding and cross passages to the front porch, and entered the Rinemond chamber—the only furnished room in the inn—exhausted. He threw himself on the bed and groaned. A fever had set in, and he was racked with pain. His thirst became so great after a while that he rose and limped back, over the devious route he had come, to the water-trough. After relieving his thirst he hunted about for some vessel in which to carry

to his room a supply of water. He found a greasy crock near the smokehouse, which he carried to the trough and cleaned with sand and water and filled. It was a labor to him to get it to his room. As the day wore away the fever left him and a chill came on. There was a pile of wood by the fire-place, and a bunch of matches on the mantel-shelf left on his previous visit. He rose from the bed and built up a fire; and, drawing up a chair, sat down and bent over it with his hands spread out. As the night advanced the fear of the superhuman took possession of him, and he started at imaginary sounds, and glanced over his shoulder, and drew closer to the fire in affright at the shadows on the wall and the flickering of the light about the room. Worn out with alarm and depression and pain, he heaped wood on the fire and got back into bed, covering up his head to shut out the visionary sights and sounds that tortured him.

But he sought repose in vain. His feet had become swollen and inflamed, and the pain was so acute that it banished sleep, permitting only now and then a fitful slumber. All that was disagreeable in the recent past came to his mind in disconnected and successive scenes, while the old refrain—What is money? What is money?—interposed between. What a fool he was, he thought, to be duped by that country greenhorn with his shallow story of a rupture with the

people at Rosedow. He ought to have known he was an emissary and meant mischief. But Pilot was to blame, for he had been taken in first and had helped deceive him. That fellow would follow him yet; he was, after all, very smart to have succeeded in throwing dust in the eyes of two such men as himself and Pilot. Who could have imagined such a thing? He began to grow afraid of Madison as he thought it over. Presently, in a slumber, he was following the phantom of Rinemond through the winding passages and up the stairs, wondering if they would take his shoes away that he had again slipped off; and again he was looking through the hole in the ragged curtain into the strange chamber; and woke himself repeating aloud his former ejaculation—"The Rinemonds, father and son!" He saw himself walking through the apartments of the dark cellar with a little boy, carrying a tiny lamp, by his side, who stopped at the open door of the wine-cave and pointed in at the bundle lying on the floor. When he went in to get it, the boy shut the door, and he again heard the bolt shoot to its place and a laugh from the boy outside. Then followed a violent altercation with Mirandy as to the amount of hire to be paid for Dandy and the damage for his disfigurement, in which he accused her of having hired Sam to maltreat the pony in order to secure damages. At last his mind wandered back to Fish Street, and

he imagined Yost telling Madison of their adventures at the Red Lion, and advising him to go down in the morning train and hunt for him. Some real or imagined noise sounded to him like the opening of the front door, and he awoke and sat up in bed and listened.

He might follow on the early train, he thought, if Yost had disclosed their former visit, and, if he had been with them at the time of his flight, nothing was more probable. He would get up early and go over the hills to Slugger's, mount Dandy, and get Sam to guide him to a place of safety. But they might come down on a night train and be at the inn by daybreak, and arrest him before he woke up. The fear of this grew so strong that he got out of bed and, disregarding the pain in his feet, walked to the fire-place and drew the chunks together and started a blaze. He opened his carpet-sack and took out the package of bonds.

"I will do," he muttered to himself, "as Rinemond did. I will hide my bundle; and, if they come in the night and arrest me, they will not get *it* any way. I can come back and get it at some future time, or I can use part of it to fee my lawyer and perhaps to buy a juryman." He rose from his chair, after attempting in vain to draw his socks on over his swollen feet, and walked to the door, without putting on his hat or coat, opened it and looked out, holding his bundle in his left

hand, as—the thought occurred to him—the phantom had held his in traversing the lower hall. The night was dark; the fire within shed a radiance through the open doorway over the porch in front, and tipped the jagged ends of the broken railing with light. He paused a few moments, as if in doubt; then, as if inspired by a sudden thought or determination, he stepped out and shut the door behind him, muttering, as he winced from the sharp pain in his feet,

"Old Slugger was right, for after all is said and done, What is money? What is money?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CASTLE MELTS INTO THIN AIR.

THE pine forest that surrounded the Red Lion was enveloped in dense fog when Rush awoke at a late hour on the following morning. The tops of the tall dark trees on the hills here and there pierced it, and traced the contour of the basin in which lay the once famous tavern thronged with guests, and now, alas! so fallen as to contain but one, and he a fugitive from justice. No lesson could teach more forcibly the instability of human affairs than did the silent, and worse than guestless, old Red Lion as it thus lay voiceless and buried in the fog.

Rush had returned to the room, after secreting his bonds, chilled, though his absence had been brief. He warmed his hands over the fire, and, after taking a stupefying dose of brandy, got into bed. The exposure of his feet to the cold or the stimulant seemed to have been beneficial, for soon after lying down the pain subsided and he fell into a profound sleep. His first act on arousing was to look at his watch. It had run down in the night. He knew the morning was approaching when he

fell asleep, and felt that he had slept long and had no time to waste if he expected to get away before the arrival of pursuers by the early train. He made a hasty toilet, slitting his socks to get them on, and further protecting his feet by tying about them pieces of his handkerchief, which he tore up for the purpose. To get his feet into his shoes was impossible. The pain, as he moved about, returned with violence. He took a drink of brandy and a cracker or two, emptied his bag of the provisions to lighten his load over the hills, and, buttoning his vest, walked to the door in his shirt-sleeves and threw it open. He could see nothing for the fog, but in a moment heard steps on the porch below and the front door creak on its rusty hinge. His impulse was to secure his bonds, but the thought flashed on his mind that he might be caught with them on his person, and it was best to leave them hidden and return for them in case he escaped. Without turning into his room he hurried to the hall and looked over the banister. He saw Madison at the foot of the stairs with a pistol in his hand, beginning to ascend, and hurrying into a passage he made his way to the head of the narrow back staircase, descended and passed through the door that he had forced the day before, crawled through the hole in the garden fence, and, entering the pathway that led over the Knob to Raccoon Hollow, disappeared in the fog.

When Madison reached the top of the stairs he

walked out on the porch and up to the open door of the Rinemond chamber. One glance within revealed the situation. He turned back to the hall and called over the banister:

"Come up, madam, there will be no pistol practice here this morning; it is put off on account of the fog; the bird has flown."

"Good gracious!" said Hollanda, as they entered the room together, "he's gone off without his hat and coat."

"He didn't stand on the order of his going, as the poet says, madam," observed Madison, looking about him, "but went at once when he heard the front door open. He has left, besides his hat and coat, his bag and lunch—and some very good brandy," he added, as he poured out and swallowed a glass. "I hope it's not poisoned. It tastes all right; shall I help you to a glass?"

"Thanks," said Hollanda, "none for me. He can't have got far, Mr. Decker. Do you intend to follow him?"

"He is lost in the fog long ago, madam," he answered, "and I am unacquainted with the road to Slugger's. Even if I knew it I would not pursue him now; he would throw the package in the bushes, and I might never get it. I think he has followed the example of his friend Rinemond and hidden his bundle, expecting to come back for it, and if so I am done with him, for he will never get it again. Madam, sit down, and after we rest

from our walk we will look up the two bundles. The plot is decidedly thickening. I will examine the chimney first, and then kindle a little fire to drive out the fog." With this he knelt on the hearth, and putting his head in the fireplace looked up.

"Nothing there, madam," he said, putting on wood and kindling a fire. "Many and many an old chimney was built with a hiding-place for money and papers, secure from the flame and smoke, and I am disappointed not to see one here, for this is a very old house. I will venture to say there *is* one in the chimney of the bedroom of the old gentleman who had this house built."

"Look into his carpet-bag, Mr. Decker," said Hollanda. "Maybe the bonds are there."

"No," answered he, "they are not there. If he didn't hide them last night he has taken them with him."

"Alva still thinks," she said, "that Mr. Rinemond hid his bundle somewhere in the ground, if he brought it at all to the Lion. But last night he told me that he more than half believed he never brought it here, but gave it to some one to keep, or hid it elsewhere. 'But,' I said, 'if so, why does his spirit haunt the Lion?'"

"As to the spirit, madam," said Madison, "I will say nothing, because I don't pretend to understand their ways; but as to Rinemond giving the money to any one to keep, that is a mistake.

When men run off with money, as he did, they carry it with them, depend on that. I wish I could persuade you to taste this fine French brandy. I feel quite grateful to Rush for having the politeness to leave it behind him. No, madam, Mr. Rinemond did not take his bundle into the yard and hide it in the ground. If he feared Mr. Yost would come to his room in the night he would have feared Mr. Yost would watch him if he stirred out. No, he hid it quite near where we are now sitting, probably not in the room, as it has been carefully searched, unless under a hearthstone, and I see no sign of any of them having been moved."

He then rose and made a rapid examination of the flooring, cupboards, and bed and bedding.

"Madam," he said, "it is not in the room. Where did the little table stand on which he wrote his last letter?"

"Where it now stands beside you," she answered.

"Well," said he, pushing his chair closer to it and facing the open doorway, "now for the Rinemond bundle. He sat here where I am now sitting," he went on slowly, speaking aloud but to himself, "and soon after writing that he feared an attempt at robbery, and intended in consequence to hide a bundle; he broke off in the middle of his letter and laid down his pen. Why? To carry out his purpose at once. Why at once?

Because as he was writing on another matter he was carrying the subject of hiding in his mind, and the hiding-place occurred to him. It was not in the room, but it was near the room, and he saw it as he came up with Yost in the evening. The door and window were open, and Yost, if watching, could see his movements. Then he put out the light and went to bed. After a time, he rose from the bed and, taking the bundle in his hand, went out on tiptoe in his naked feet on the porch and hid it, and, as the night was dark perhaps slipped off the porch in doing so. Come," he said, rising up and pointing with his forefinger to the rotten porch by the broken railing, and frightening Hollanda by his weird manner, "it is *there*, between the flooring and the lath beneath."

Both were there; the bundle of Rinemond and the bundle of Rush, and the country youth who had meditated and communed with nature in his native mountains triumphed over the sharp and cunning man bred in the city.

As Madison drove up the next evening to the front of Rosedow, old Mr. Decker, bareheaded and followed by his daughter, ran down the steps to the carriage door and called out:

"Did you recover any thing, Madie?"

"The last dollar," he answered, as he stepped from the carriage and saluted them.

"Great heavens! What a genius!" said Decker. "What a blessing! Come in and tell

us the whole story," and the party walked into the library, the young couple supporting the old gentleman, who trembled with excitement.

"Here," said Madison, laying on the table before him as he took his seat, a package of bonds, "is the principal, nearly, of which the sharpers robbed you—and here," dropping a purse of gold on the package, "is the balance in cash. I have kept my brag."

Della rose from her seat and going up to Madison, threw her arms about his neck and kissed him, and her father, covering his face, bowed his head and wept tears of joy.

To the wedding that soon followed came the Deckers of Giles in full force, and with them the Lovat of Dounie come down from his mountain fastness to honor his pupil in the chase. Yost and Hollanda and Barney came up, and the friends from the city, families Decker of Rosedow knew when in business, and the Bronsons and neighbors in the Highlands. A wedding trip was taken to Giles County, and among the picnics that came off in that visit was one to the castle, where the company were entertained on game in every variety, and at night with tales of the old lords of Lovat, especially of the one who was decapitated on Tower Hill. The paper at the Court House came out each week with glowing descriptions of the entertainments, picnics, fishing and boating, dancing and riding parties, and

declared that all the men were envious of Madison and all the women of his wife, that the valor of the southern and the beauty of the northern Highlands had met, and now at last the North and South had shaken hands and fraternity would reign hereafter.

Pilot kept the midnight appointment at the Brooklyn ferry and waited until two o'clock for Rush, uncertain whether he had been arrested or had made the appointment in bad faith. He strolled up-town with his sack in his hand and thought over, as he went, the best course for him to pursue. If he had not warned Rush, he thought he might have remained in the city unmolested and eventually have established a practice and succeeded. He had duped the unhappy Deckers, it is true, and displayed great talent, and laid the foundation of a fortune; but how miserably he had been duped in turn, and by a young fellow fresh from the country! It was too mortifying to contemplate, and he turned from the picture in disgust. Where would he go? He sat down on a step and thought. He might go down to Southwest Virginia and make a sale of stock to Madison's father; and then go West. This was a pleasing thought; but Madison had lied so in other matters, he had no doubt lied in representing his father as willing to buy an interest. No, there was nothing in it; he had lied. His father, who had been so smart as to sell, would be too smart

to buy. A policemen came by and ordered him to move on; and he got up and walked toward his office. His mother had given him an old ring that his father had worn. He remembered that it was in the drawer of his desk, and he determined he would go and get it, then take the first train out, and go into the unknown and illimitable West, and grow up, as a recent editorial had suggested, with the country. If Barney was sleeping in the back room, he would wake him and learn what he knew of Rush. Thus meditating, he turned into Fish Street and, avoiding the policeman, reached his office, unlocked the door and entered. He secured the ring and a few papers and letters, and tore up and burned others, and, taking up the lamp, went into Barney's room, where he found that individual sleeping the sound sleep of one whose past record had been blotted out and forgiven.

"Barney," he said, giving him a shake, "wake up."

"Why, Mr. Pilot," said Barney, "how you frightened me!" and sitting up in bed he added, "where is Mr. Rush?"

"That," answered Pilot, "is what I wish you to tell me. What do you know of him?"

"We found him gone," answered Barney, "when we went to his room, and Mr. Decker, when we came down and found you gone too, laughed and said: 'Barney, you and Mr. Lynch

go down to his chief and describe Mr. Rush and have him looked up.' We went, and the chief said: 'If the gentleman wants him looked up, he had better come to the office himself and show some interest in the case'; and when we went back and reported Mr. Decker laughed and said: 'Let the poor devil go,' and paid Mr. Lynch fifty dollars, and told him he was ever so much obliged to him; the thing was played out, and he had no further need of his services."

"Did he say any thing about me?" inquired Pilot.

"Never mentioned your name," answered Barney.

"Has he gone to Rosedow?" asked Pilot.

"No," answered Barney, "but he ordered me to have a hack at the door in the morning in time for the Jersey train, and Mrs. Yost is going with him, from what I overheard. I suspect they are going to the Red Lion, or what would she be going with him for? I suspect Yost has let out about our hunting for Mr. Rinemond's bundle."

"Did you and Rush go with him to the Lion?" inquired Pilot, in surprise.

"Why, bless your soul, yes," answered Barney. "That was what turned his hair white, but he swore me to secrecy, Mr. Pilot. I shouldn't be surprised if they thought Mr. Rush has gone there or to Slugger's to hide. Why, he knows the Lion and Slugger's as well as Yost does."

"Barney," said Pilot, "hold up your right hand."

"You needn't swear me, Mr. Pilot," said Barney in alarm. "I wouldn't do any thing to harm you; I wouldn't, indeed."

"Do you solemnly promise, then," said Pilot, "not to mention having seen me until Mrs. Yost gets back to the city? I don't ask much, you see."

"I solemnly promise, so help me," said Barney, partially raising his hand; and Pilot bade him good-night and left the office. The day was breaking as he reached the Jersey ferry, and, crossing, he took a seat at a window of a saloon that commanded the entrance to the station, and saw Madison and Hollanda take the train. He followed in the succeeding one, alighted at Baker Station, and took the road to the Lion. The fog was beginning to lift as he approached it, and he saw Madison and Hollanda come out of the front door and lock it. He stepped into a clump of scrub pine to let them pass, and heard Hollanda say:

"Now that you have found the Rinemond bundle, Mr. Decker, the ghost will quit the Lion."

"He will be a very unreasonable ghost, madam," her companion answered, "if he doesn't," and they passed on.

Pilot walked around the inn, and, seeing every access closed, took the path that led to Slugger's,

crossed over Possum Knob, and had half-way reached his destination, when he heard to his right a voice call out:

"Pilot, by Jove!"

He turned into the bushes, and saw Rush sitting on the ground, his feet swollen, and the strips of white linen about them stained red, his white head uncovered, and in his shirt-sleeves.

"Great heaven, Rush," he exclaimed, "what a spectacle you present!"

"I escaped by the skin of my teeth, Pilot," he replied, "and when I got this far I broke down. I couldn't walk another step to save me."

"Let me help you," said Pilot, approaching.

"Not a bit of it," he answered. "You would have to carry me every step. I can't put a foot to the ground. Hurry on to Slugger's and send Sam back with Dandy. I dreamed about Dandy last night. Good horse! I wish he was here now. Don't stop to talk. Hurry up."

Pilot found Sam at Slugger's paying court to Mirandy. She was very suave and complaisant. He had bought Wildcat Hollow and proposed, and been accepted, under oath to quit coon-hunting forever. He mounted Dandy and galloped to the rescue of his benefactor, and brought him in in triumph, rejoiced to be of service. After mutual explanations, Rush said:

"I thought a good deal as I lay in the bush, Pilot, and here is what I have determined to do.

If you will join, all right. If my feet are better, we will go to the Lion in the morning, I on Dandy, and Sam ahead as a spy. If that awful Decker youth has not found our bonds, we will take them and go West, and do the best we can with the money, with the understanding that we will refund to Decker of Rosedow principal and interest as soon as we have turned it over. As old Slugger said to Sam, 'What is money, that one should give up his peace of mind for it? If we find luck has followed this chap to the end, and he has found the bonds I hid, we will go on to the station and take the train for the West any way, and go together into some honest business, and if we make no more than board and clothing, let it suffice it is as much as any one gets, after all. One can't eat money or wear it, either. I am beginning to think there are some other things in this world of value besides a bank account, to say nothing of the next world where they neither make deposits nor draw checks. What do you say?"

"Amen!" responded Pilot; and the next morning, owing to an application of Miranda's concoction, the invalid was quite restored; and, going over as arranged, Sam spied out and reported the coast clear, and they entered the inn and ascended to the porch. Rush put in his hand, and drew from under the floor an envelope, such as banks use in inclosing bonds, on which was printed the name

of the bank of which Rinemond had been cashier. It was stained, and had evidently been exposed for a length of time, and was clearly the covering of the bundle hidden by that unfortunate man. On the clear and unstained portion of this paper was traced in pencil the following lines, which Rush read aloud:

"Mr. Madison Decker presents his compliments to Mr. Rush, and begs to inform him that he abstracted from this hole a few minutes after Mr. Rush's hurried departure the Rinemond bundle and the Decker bonds. This to save his esteemed friend further trouble and anxiety."

"Resolved unanimously," said Rush, as he tore up the envelope, and tossed the pieces through the hole in the railing, and watched them flutter into the trough below, "that honesty is the best policy"; and the two adventurers took the train for the West, firmly resolved to make an honest record in the new land, bank account or no bank account.

Advertisements in the city papers for the heirs of Cook, late cashier of the Bank of Defiance, met with no response; and after the return of Madison from his wedding tour he came down to the city and held a consultation with the Yosts as to the disposition of the bundle. Hollanda said, when he introduced the subject:

"Finders are keepers, Mr. Decker; the bonds are yours. The story Mr. Rush told Alva as

coming from Rinemond himself, about his childhood, I don't doubt is true. The fact that no one answers your advertisement confirms it."

"I have been to the bank, and they deny having lost any thing by him," said Madison, "and stick to their story that they knew he was going, and that he went out West. I wish you would divide the bundle with me; it was found in your house, and is more money than I know what to do with; and you helped to find it, and are entitled to half at least."

"Neither Alva nor I will touch a dollar of it," she answered. "I couldn't sleep in peace if either of us did. The ghost will not haunt you, for you are an innocent man; but it would us, and we should deserve it. Keep the money, and say no more about it. I have sent Mr. Pilot's things to his poor mother at Benvelt. She writes me her house is mortgaged, and she is in great distress."

"She is your relative," said he. "I will go down on the morning train and pay off her mortgage. You don't object to that?"

"No," she answered, "that is charity. I can not scruple that."

"And Barney," he said, "where is he? I must help poor Barney."

"He is keeping the office at No. 10," she answered, "and being dunned for the rent. He tells them to wait until Mr. Pilot gets back, and he looks each day to see him walk in."

"I will go down and see him now," said Madison, "and must set him up in business."

"Barney," he said, as he entered the office a few minutes later, "how goes it?"

"Bad, Mr. Decker," he answered. "Mr. Pilot hasn't got back yet, and the house agent is dunning me to death for the rent. I can't stand it much longer; it's using me up. And he threatens to sell our furniture and turn me out."

"Pilot is not coming back, Barney," said Madison. "You helped hunt the bundle and shall profit by it. I will pay your board and lodging at Yost's, and your office rent for a year or so, until you get business. Take Pilot's room and keep the place. Have a sign painted, and go into real estate. Go back to the business you were trained in. Collect rents, and draw up papers, and attend to all branches of the business. I will ask Mr. Decker to turn over to you his rents to collect, and that will give you a start and a character. By the way, here are your Thaddeus and Outcalt bills of sale. Don't do any more business for these gentlemen."

"Never, so help me," said Barney. "I made one slip and was led into another, but I'll die before I make a third."

"Good-by, Barney," said Madison, handing him some money; "stick to that. Go pay your rent and order your sign. I'll send you down a check from time to time, and will arrange with

Yost for your board and lodging, and first-class at that. Attend to your business, and don't turn the corner oftener than you can help. Good-by."

The estates of Raccoon and Wildcat were united. The widow Pilot was helped beyond the lifting of the mortgage for a year or two, when funds reached her from the West in amounts to free her from care and dependence. The real-estate business grew and flourished. The Deckers throughout the land were advised by letter and the public press that the "Castle in the Air" had vanished, and that from first to last it had been as baseless as the fabric of a vision. But nothing will ever drive from the imagination of the family the princely estate lying in the heart of the new city, or the piles of untold gold that cumber the vaults of the old bank. The articles written by Rush, and the letters of Pilot, will be handed down to succeeding generations; and a long line of Pilots will lure them, one by one as they arise, in search of that edifice into which no heir will ever enter, and out of which no good will ever come.

THE END.

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[OVER].

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